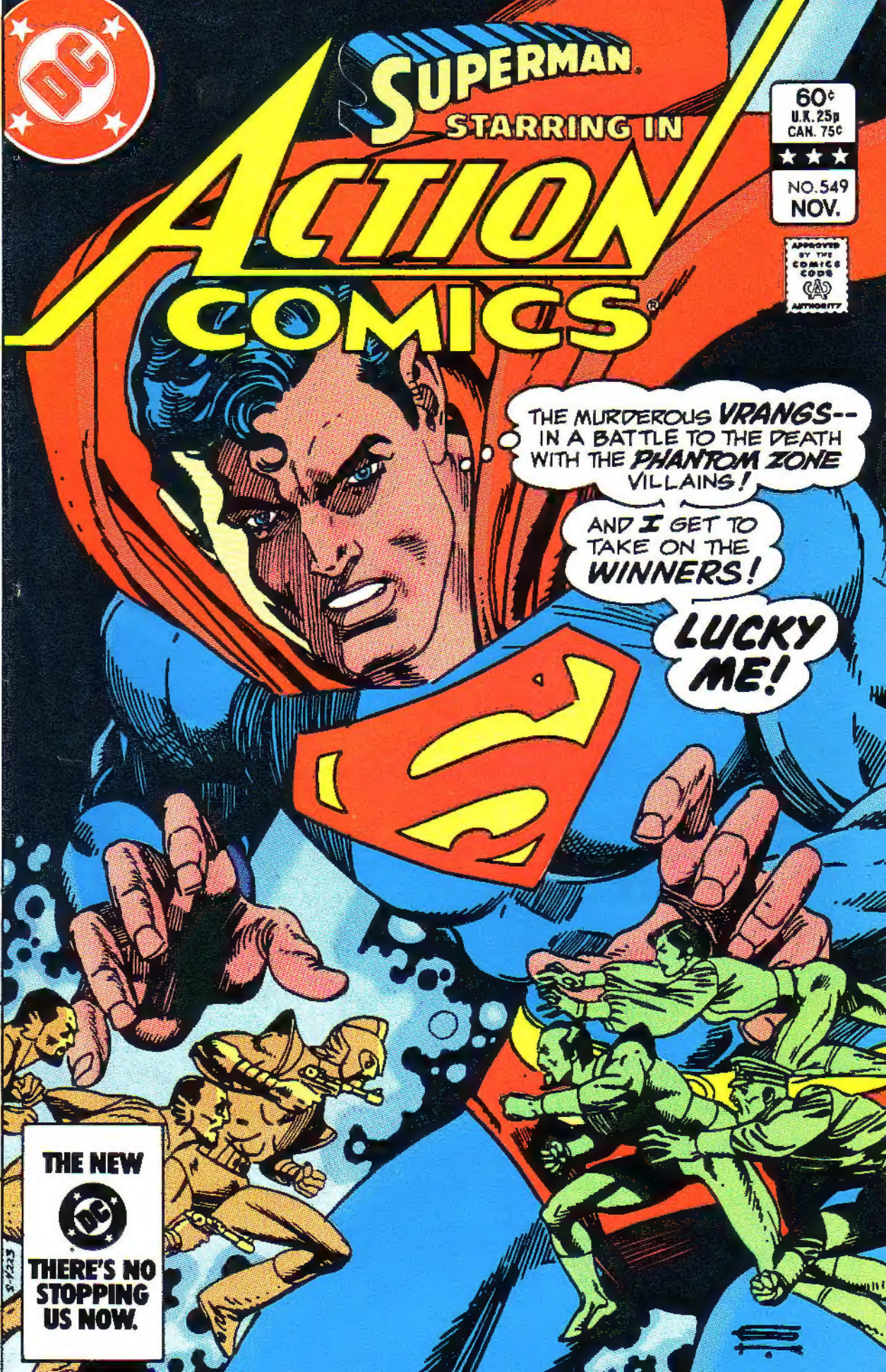
SUPERMAN
STARRING IN
ACTION COMICS
60¢
U.K. 25p
CAN. 75¢
NO. 549
NOV.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE MURDEROUS VRANGS-- IN A BATTLE TO THE DEATH WITH THE PHANTOM ZONE VILLAINS!
AND I GET TO TAKE ON THE WINNERS!
LUCKY ME!
THE NEW
THERE'S NO STOPPING US NOW.

ROCKETED AS A BABY FROM THE EXPLODING PLANET KRYPTON, KAL-EL GREW TO MANHOOD ON EARTH--WHOSE YELLOW SUN AND LIGHTER GRAVITY GAVE HIM FANTASTIC SUPER-POWERS! IN THE CITY OF METROPOLIS, HE POSES AS MILD-MANNERED NEWSMAN CLARK KENT--BUT BATTLES EVIL ALL OVER EARTH--AND BEYOND--AS...
SUPERMAN
Created by JERRY SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER
IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE YOU CAN'T BE SEEN OR HEARD!
YOU REACH OUT AND TOUCH YOUR NEIGHBOR... AND YOUR HAND PASSES THROUGH HIM!
IMAGINE THE SHEER HELL OF LIVING IN... THE PHANTOM ZONE!
WE ARE UNABLE TO AFFECT THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE... BUT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE MUST!
WE CARE NOTHING FOR EARTH--WE DESPISE KAL-EL! YET WE HAD TO INTERVENE!
IN DEEP SPACE WE STAND... WRAITHLIKE... WHILE A DREAD MENACE EVEN NOW APPROACHES EARTH--AND OUR FOE, SUPERMAN!
SO BY CONCENTRATING DEEPLY ON A CHUNK OF JEWEL KRYPTONITE... FOUR OF OUR NUMBER ESCAPED THE ZONE... AND HEADED FOR EARTH!
THERE, SUPERMAN ALREADY HAS HIS HANDS FULL!
HIS HOME CITY CONTENDS WITH A CRIME WAVE... AND HE'S NOTICED THAT A VIGILANTE FORCE HAS RISEN TO STEM THAT TIDE... WITH SUSPICIOUSLY KRYPTONIAN EQUIPMENT!
BUT THESE PROBLEMS OF HIS WILL PALE... ONCE...
SUPERMAN MEETS THE ZOD SQUAD!
(CONTINUING AN UNTOLD TALE OF THE MAN OF STEEL!)
CARY BATES, WRITER * ALEX SAVIUK, PENCILLER * VINCE COLLETTA, INKER * MILT SNAPINN, LETTERER * ANTHONY TOLLINN COLORIST
JULIUS SCHWARTZ, EDITOR * SPLASH INKED BY PABLO MARCOS

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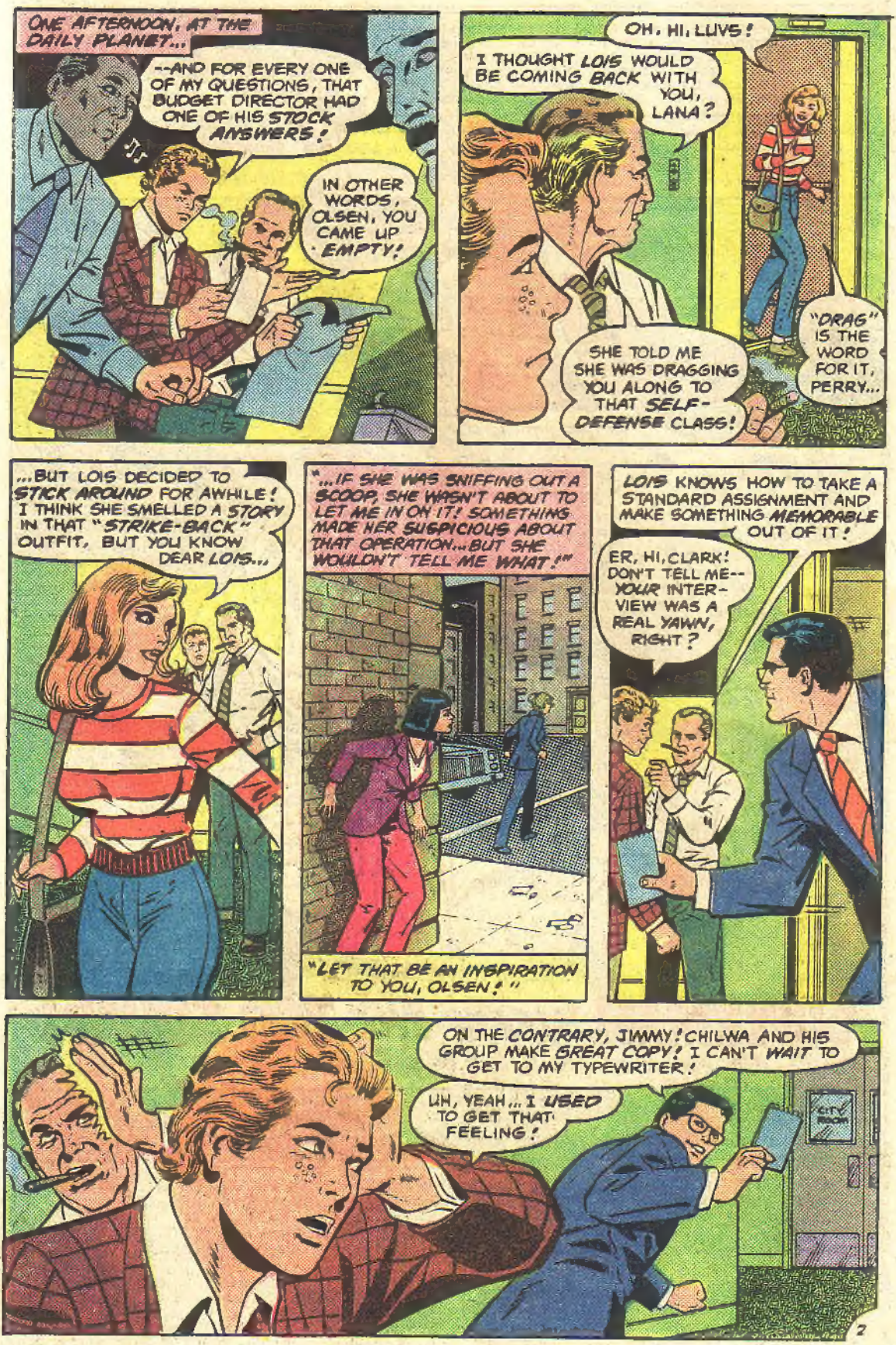
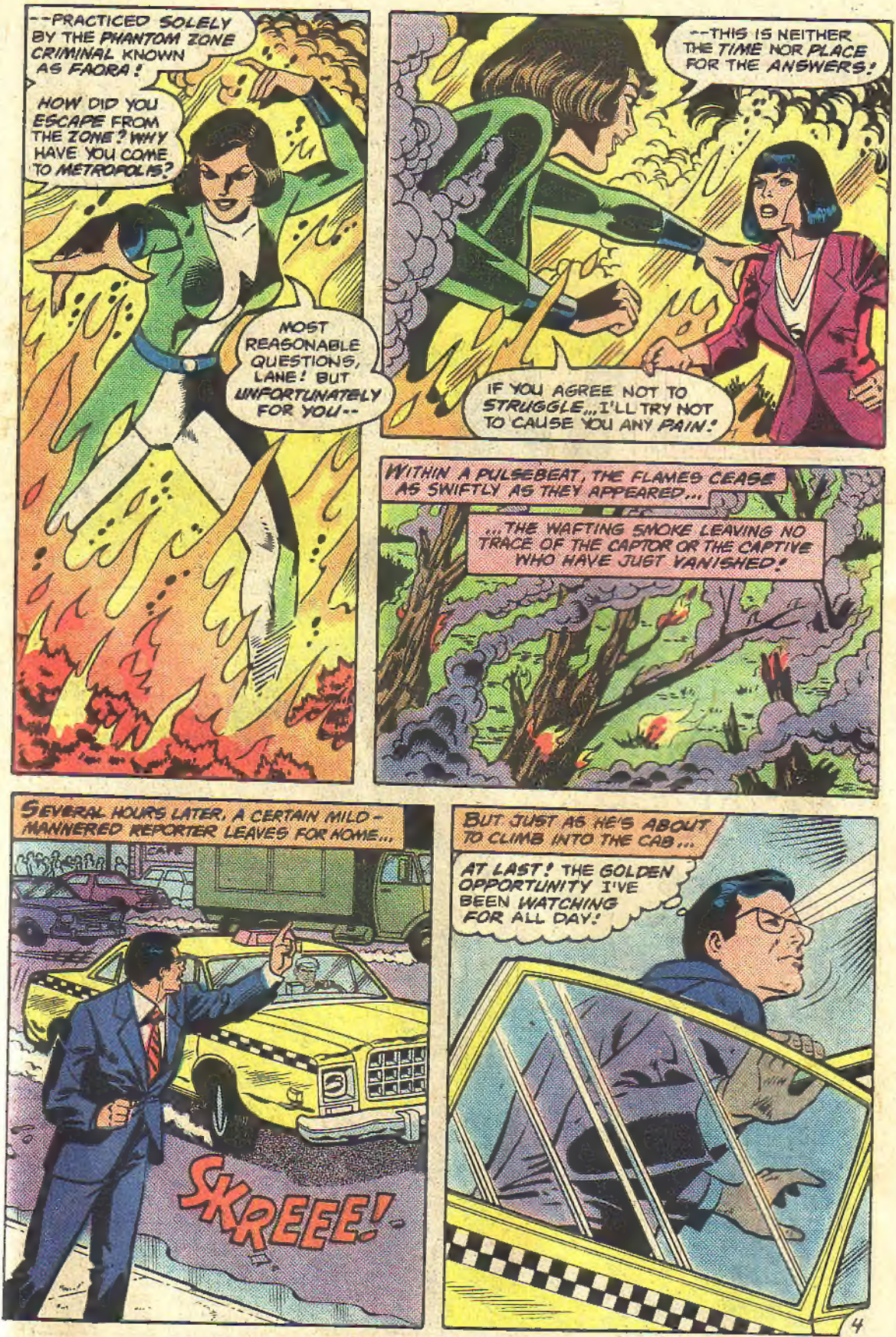

ONE AFTERNOON, AT THE DAILY PLANET...
--AND FOR EVERY ONE OF MY QUESTIONS, THAT BUDGET DIRECTOR HAD ONE OF HIS STOCK ANSWERS!
IN OTHER WORDS, OLSEN, YOU CAME UP EMPTY!
OH, HI, LUVS!
I THOUGHT LOIS WOULD BE COMING BACK WITH YOU, LANA?
SHE TOLD ME SHE WAS DRAGGING YOU ALONG TO THAT SELF-DEFENSE CLASS!
"DRAG" IS THE WORD FOR IT, PERRY...
...BUT LOIS DECIDED TO STICK AROUND FOR AWHILE! I THINK SHE SMELLED A STORY IN THAT "STRIKE-BACK" OUTFIT, BUT YOU KNOW DEAR LOIS...
"...IF SHE WAS SNIFFING OUT A SCOOP, SHE WASN'T ABOUT TO LET ME IN ON IT! SOMETHING MADE HER SUSPICIOUS ABOUT THAT OPERATION...BUT SHE WOULDN'T TELL ME WHAT!"
"LET THAT BE AN INSPIRATION TO YOU, OLSEN!"
LOIS KNOWS HOW TO TAKE A STANDARD ASSIGNMENT AND MAKE SOMETHING MEMORABLE OUT OF IT!
ER, HI, CLARK! DON'T TELL ME--YOUR INTERVIEW WAS A REAL YAWN, RIGHT?
ON THE CONTRARY, JIMMY! CHILWA AND HIS GROUP MAKE GREAT COPY! I CAN'T WAIT TO GET TO MY TYPEWRITER!
UH, YEAH... I USED TO GET THAT FEELING!
CITY ROOM

MEANWHILE, AT METROPOLIS PARK...
?!? I DON'T GET IT! HOW COULD SHE HAVE LOST ME SO QUICKLY... UNLESS MY SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE MASTERFUL "MRS. SIMPSON" WERE RIGHT ON TARGET!
AS SOON AS I USED THAT HORU-KANU REVERSAL ON YOU IN THE GYM, I DISCERNED THE GLIMMER OF SUSPICION ON YOUR FACE, LOIS LANE!
SURPRISINGLY, THE NEXT MOMENT...
FLAMES--? TREES AND BUSHES IGNITED INSTANTANEOUSLY-- AS IF THEY HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO HEAT VISION!
WHAT DID YOU EXPECT-- CONSIDERING HORU-KANU IS AN ANCIENT KRYPTONIAN FORM OF MARTIAL ART--


--PRACTICED SOLELY BY THE PHANTOM ZONE CRIMINAL KNOWN AS FAORA!
HOW DID YOU ESCAPE FROM THE ZONE? WHY HAVE YOU COME TO METROPOLIS?
MOST REASONABLE QUESTIONS, LANE! BUT UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU--
--THIS IS NEITHER THE TIME NOR PLACE FOR THE ANSWERS!
IF YOU AGREE NOT TO STRUGGLE... I'LL TRY NOT TO CAUSE YOU ANY PAIN!
WITHIN A PULSEBEAT, THE FLAMES CEASE AS SWIFTLY AS THEY APPEARED...
...THE WAFTING SMOKE LEAVING NO TRACE OF THE CAPTOR OR THE CAPTIVE WHO HAVE JUST VANISHED!
SEVERAL HOURS LATER, A CERTAIN MILD-MANNERED REPORTER LEAVES FOR HOME...
SKREEE!
BUT JUST AS HE'S ABOUT TO CLIMB INTO THE CAB...
AT LAST! THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY I'VE BEEN WATCHING FOR ALL DAY!
4

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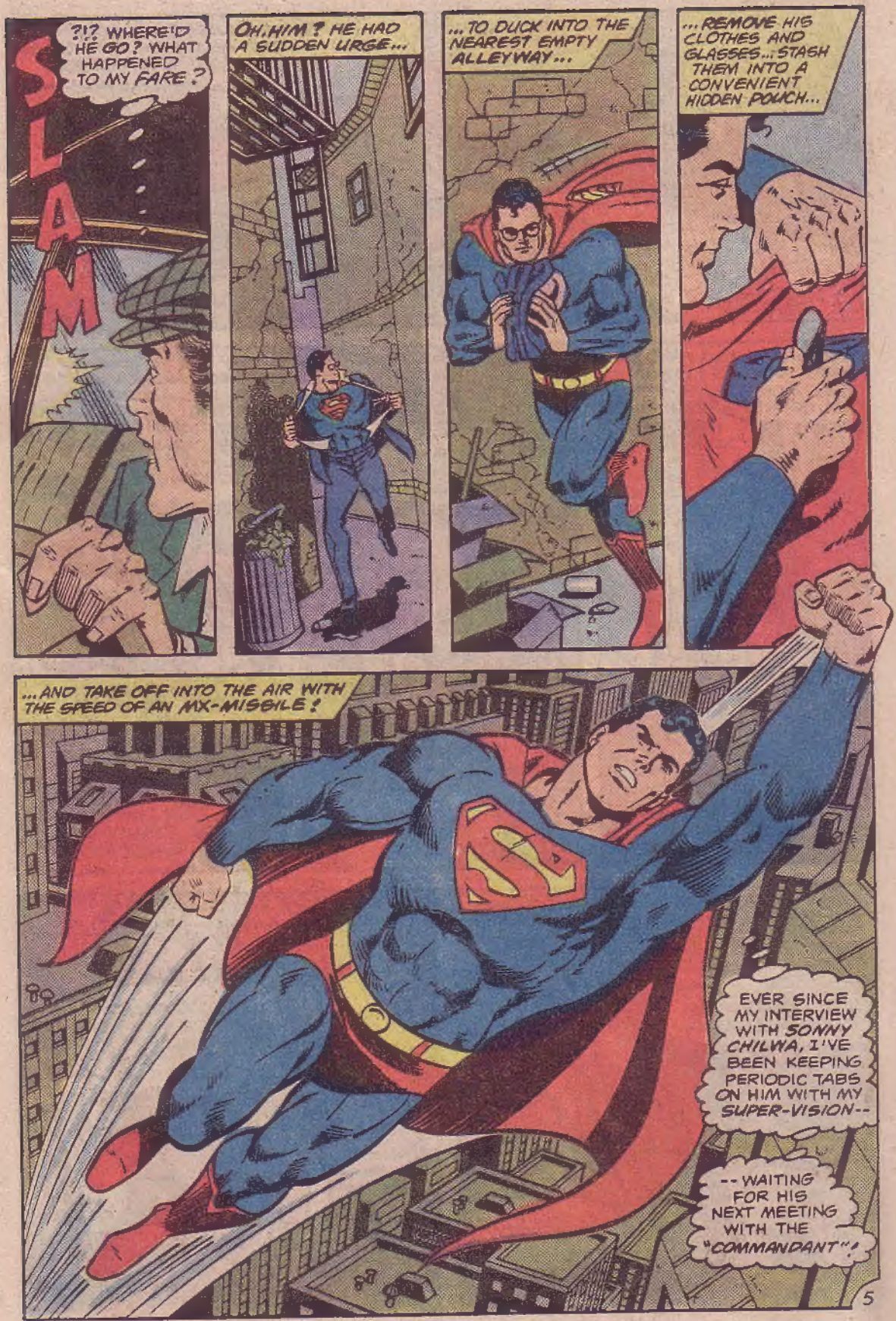
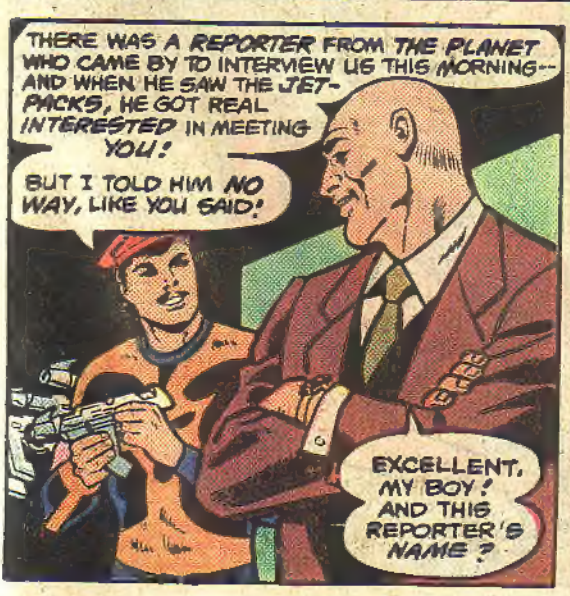

SLAM
?!? WHERE'D HE GO? WHAT HAPPENED TO MY FARE?
OH, HIM? HE HAD A SUDDEN URGE...
...TO DUCK INTO THE NEAREST EMPTY ALLEYWAY...
...REMOVE HIS CLOTHES AND GLASSES... STASH THEM INTO A CONVENIENT HIDDEN POUCH...
...AND TAKE OFF INTO THE AIR WITH THE SPEED OF AN MX-MISSILE!
EVER SINCE MY INTERVIEW WITH SONNY CHILWA, I'VE BEEN KEEPING PERIODIC TABS ON HIM WITH MY SUPER-VISION--
--WAITING FOR HIS NEXT MEETING WITH THE "COMMANDANT"!

AND UNLESS I'M MISTAKEN IT LOOKS AS THOUGH MY PATIENCE IS ABOUT TO PAY OFF!

YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT US TO GO IN WITH YOU, SONNY?
NAH! YOU KNOW HOW THE COMMANDANT HATES CROWD SCENES!
THIS SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG! YOU GUYS STAND WATCH OUT HERE!
DUNBAR

INSIDE THE ABANDONED WAREHOUSE, THE WILDCAT LEADER FINDS AN EYE-DAZZLING DISPLAY AWAITING HIM...
OH, WOW! WHAT HAVE WE GOT HERE--LEFTOVER PROPS FROM STAR WARS?
THEY ARE CALLED NEUTRALIZERS, SONNY...

...AND THEY'RE DESIGNED TO MOMENTARILY PARALYZE A CRIMINAL ADVERSARY... WITHOUT CAUSING ANY PERMANENT HARM! NO DOUBT YOU WILDCATS WILL PUT THEM TO GOOD USE!
WHEW! FIRST THE JET-PACKS AND NOW THESE! YOU'RE TOO MUCH, COMMANDANT!


THERE WAS A REPORTER FROM THE PLANET WHO CAME BY TO INTERVIEW US THIS MORNING--AND WHEN HE SAW THE JET-PACKS, HE GOT REAL INTERESTED IN MEETING YOU!
BUT I TOLD HIM NO WAY, LIKE YOU SAID!
EXCELLENT, MY BOY! AND THIS REPORTER'S NAME?

KENT... CLARK KENT!
YES, I EXPECTED IT MIGHT BE! WE WERE PREPARED FOR THIS CONTINGENCY, OF COURSE...
... BUT I MUST BEAM THE ALERT-CODE TO THE OTHERS!

AT THAT MOMENT, IN FRONT OF A SCHOOL IN THE METROPOLIS SUBURBS...
YEE-III! BRAKES WENT OUT-- CAN'T STOP!
?!? THIS IS WAY OUT-- TOO MUCH!
OH, BOY! THAT CROSSING-GUARD STOPPED THE TRUCK JUST LIKE SUPERMAN WOULD HAVE!
ZEEP ZEEP
WHEE! NOW HE'S TAKIN' OFF LIKE SUPERMAN!
AND HE'S WEARING A COSTUME UNDER-NEATH HIS UNIFORM!
ZEEP
I BETTER SEE A DOCTOR!
AND IN THE CITY'S "SKID-ROW" SECTION, IN A BACK ALLEY, A DERE-LICT IS SUDDENLY AWAKENED FROM A PEACEFUL SNOOZE...
HEY, SNAKE-- WHADYA SAY WE HOIST THIS LOSER UPSIDE-DOWN AND SEE IF HE'S CARRYIN' ANYTHING WE CAN HOCK!
YEAH! YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT THESE BUMS STASH IN THEIR POCKETS!
CHECK OUT THAT WRIST, SNAKE! I THINK WE LUCKED OUT TODAY!
IT DON'T LOOK LIKE ANY WRISTWATCH I EVER SEEN-- BUT IT OUGHTTA PULL IN A FAT PRICE ON THE STREET!
ZEEP ZEEP

COUNT YOURSELVES FORTUNATE THAT I CANNOT STAY TO ADMINISTER THE TREATMENT YOU DESERVE!
OOOG!
THWAKKK
YIEEE!
SINCE WHEN DOES A BUM THROW A WALLOP THAT COULD FLATTEN LARRY HOLMES?
HE'S NO BUM! SEE FOR YOURSELF!
IT WAS ALL A SCAM! NOW HE'S TAKING OFF LIKE A REGULAR MAN OF STEEL!
I DON'T GET IT! WHAT WENT DOWN HERE?
US, MAN! AND IF WE GOT ANY SMARTS LEFT, WE'LL TAKE OFF TOO, WHILE WE STILL GOT LEGS TO DO IT WITH!
AND SIMULTANEOUSLY...
RUN THAT PAST ME AGAIN, COMMANDANT! WHAT'S THIS ABOUT ALERTING THE OTHERS?
I BELIEVE YOUR CURIOSITY IS ABOUT TO BE SATISFIED, MR. CHILWA!
KRRAACKK!

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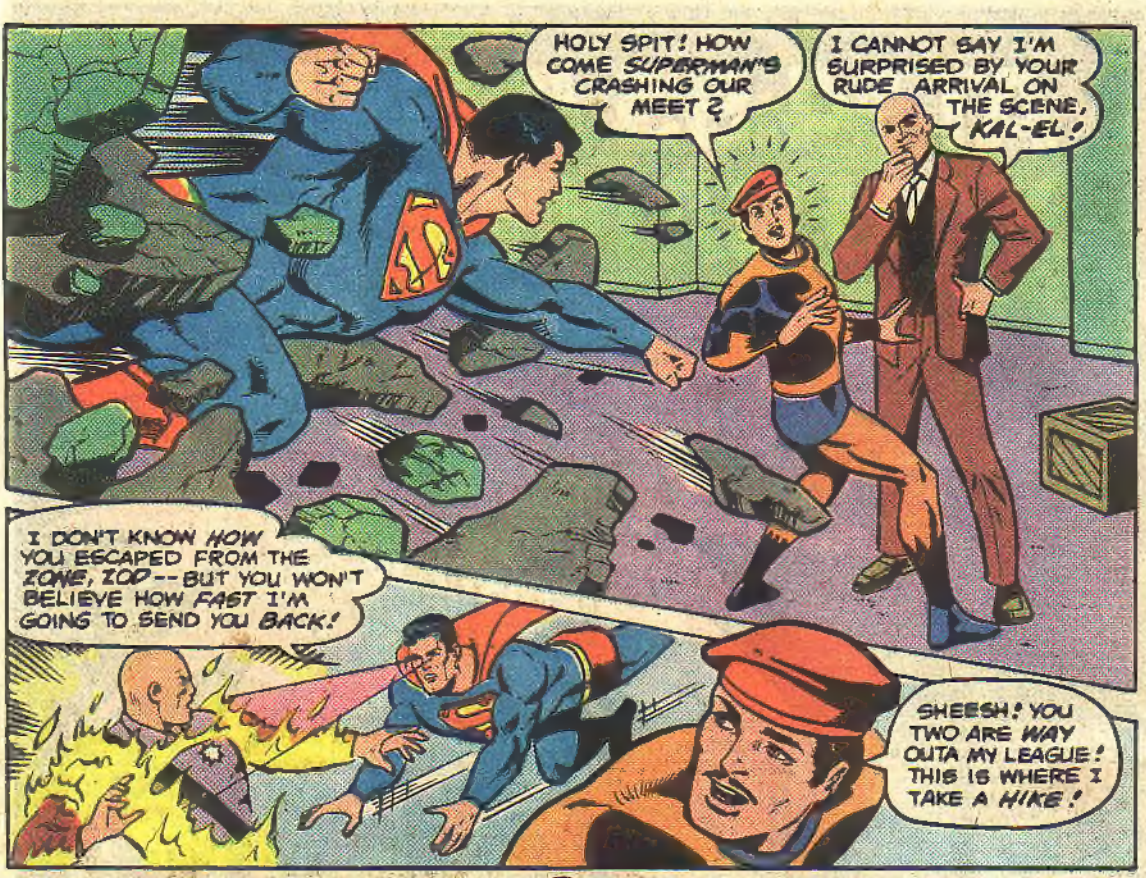
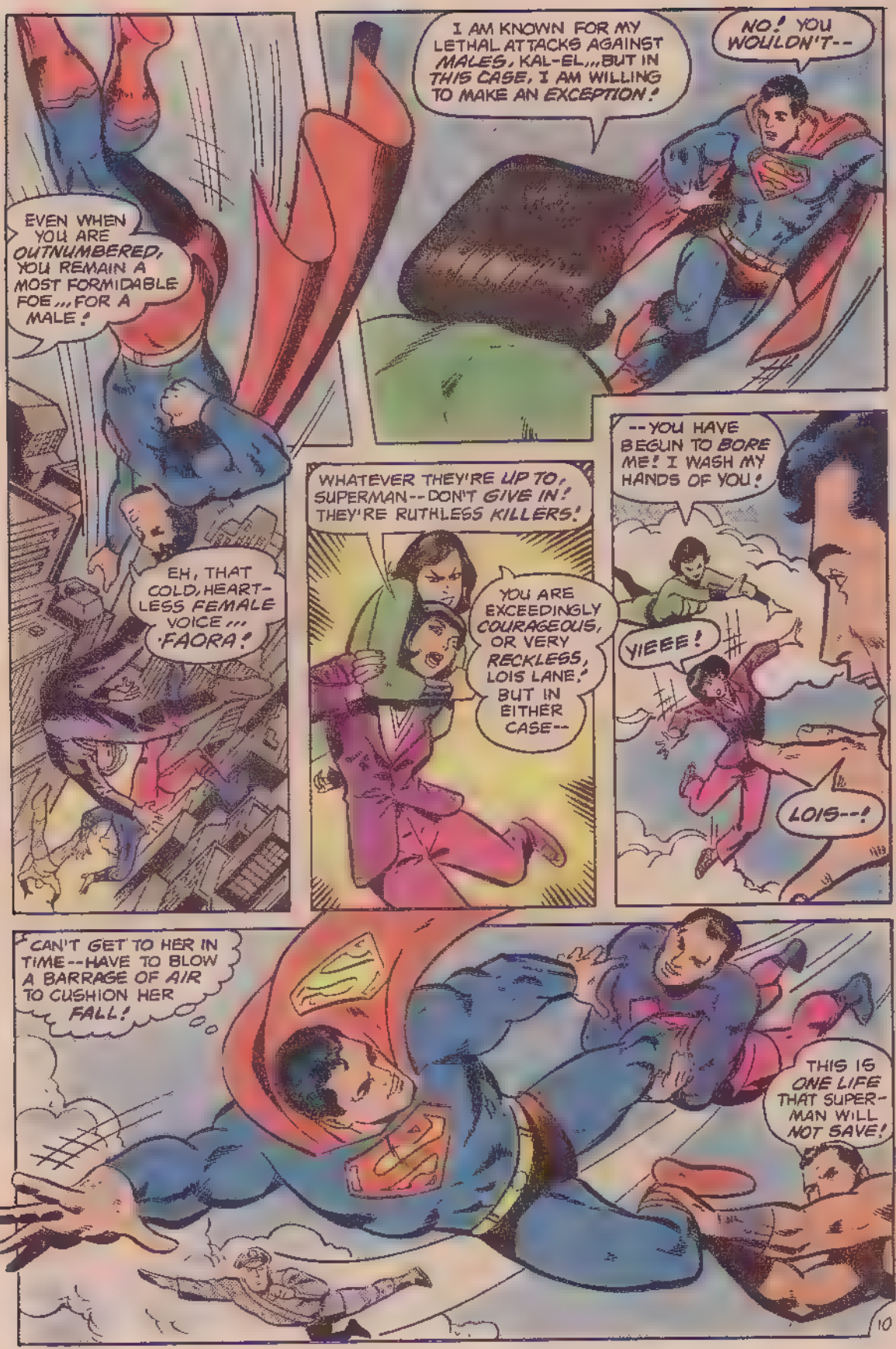
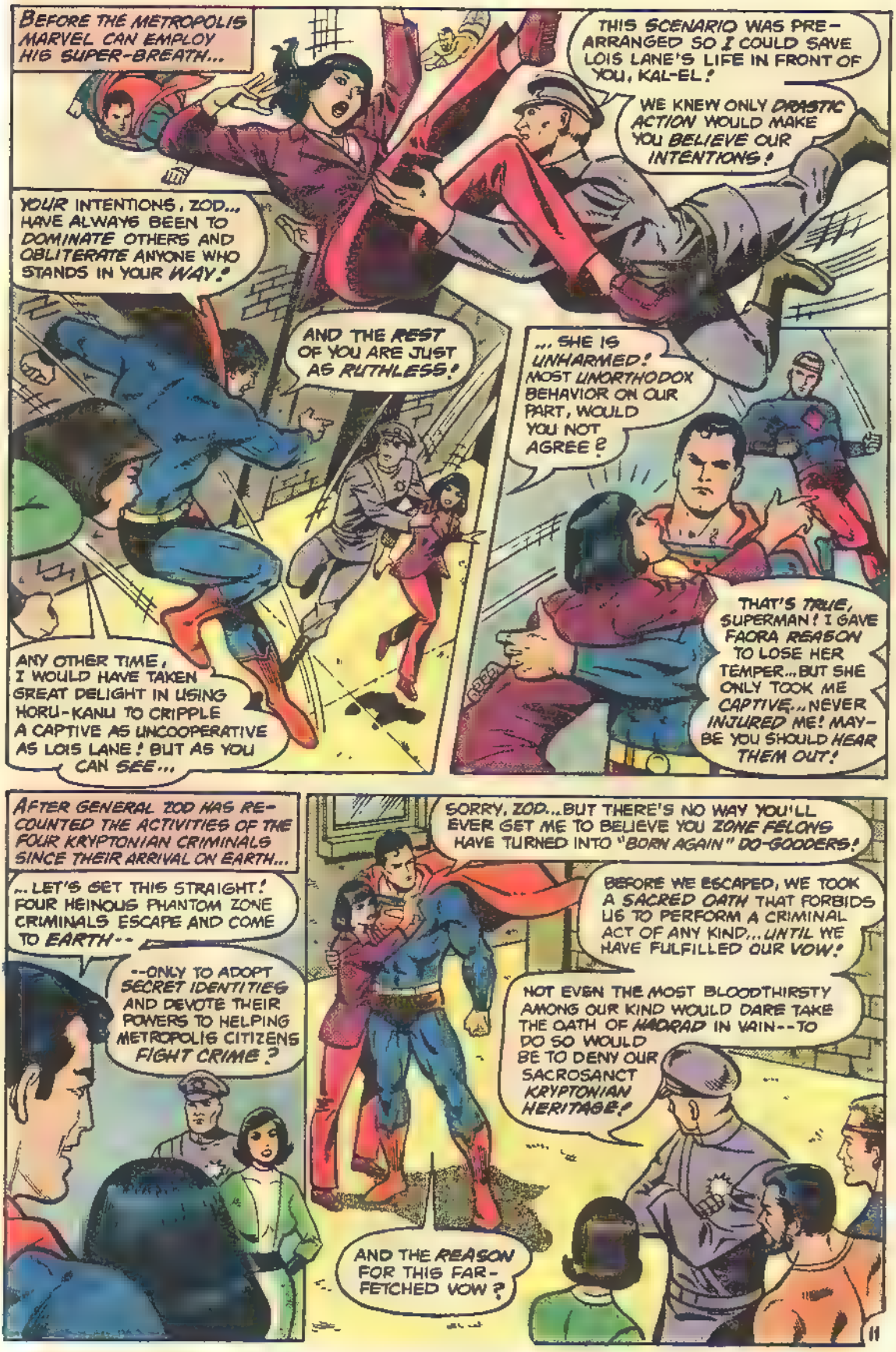
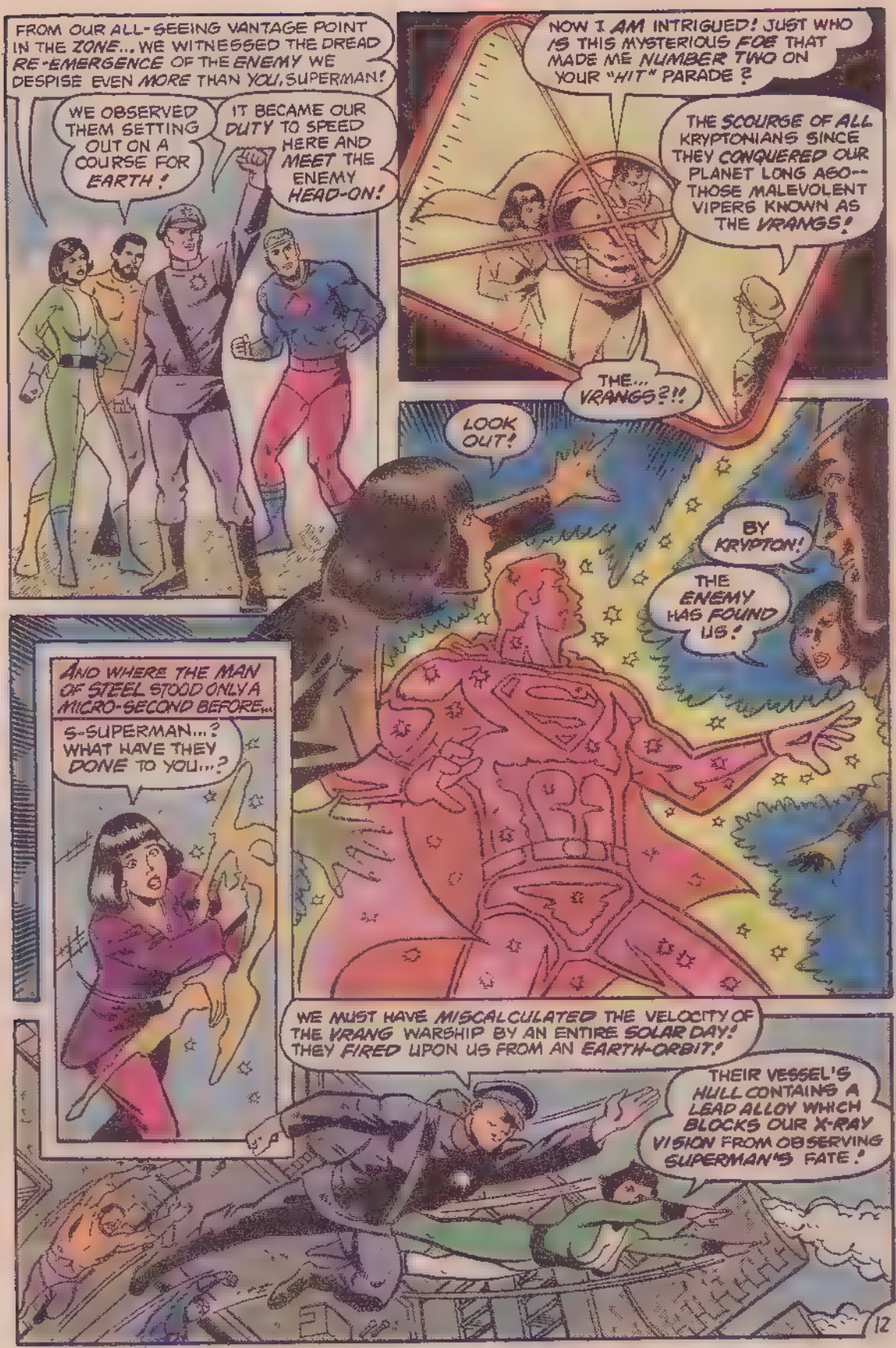

HOLY SPIT! HOW COME SUPERMAN'S CRASHING OUR MEET?
I CANNOT SAY I'M SURPRISED BY YOUR RUDE ARRIVAL ON THE SCENE, KAL-EL!
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU ESCAPED FROM THE ZONE, ZOD -- BUT YOU WON'T BELIEVE HOW FAST I'M GOING TO SEND YOU BACK!
SHEESH! YOU TWO ARE WAY OUTA MY LEAGUE! THIS IS WHERE I TAKE A HIKE!

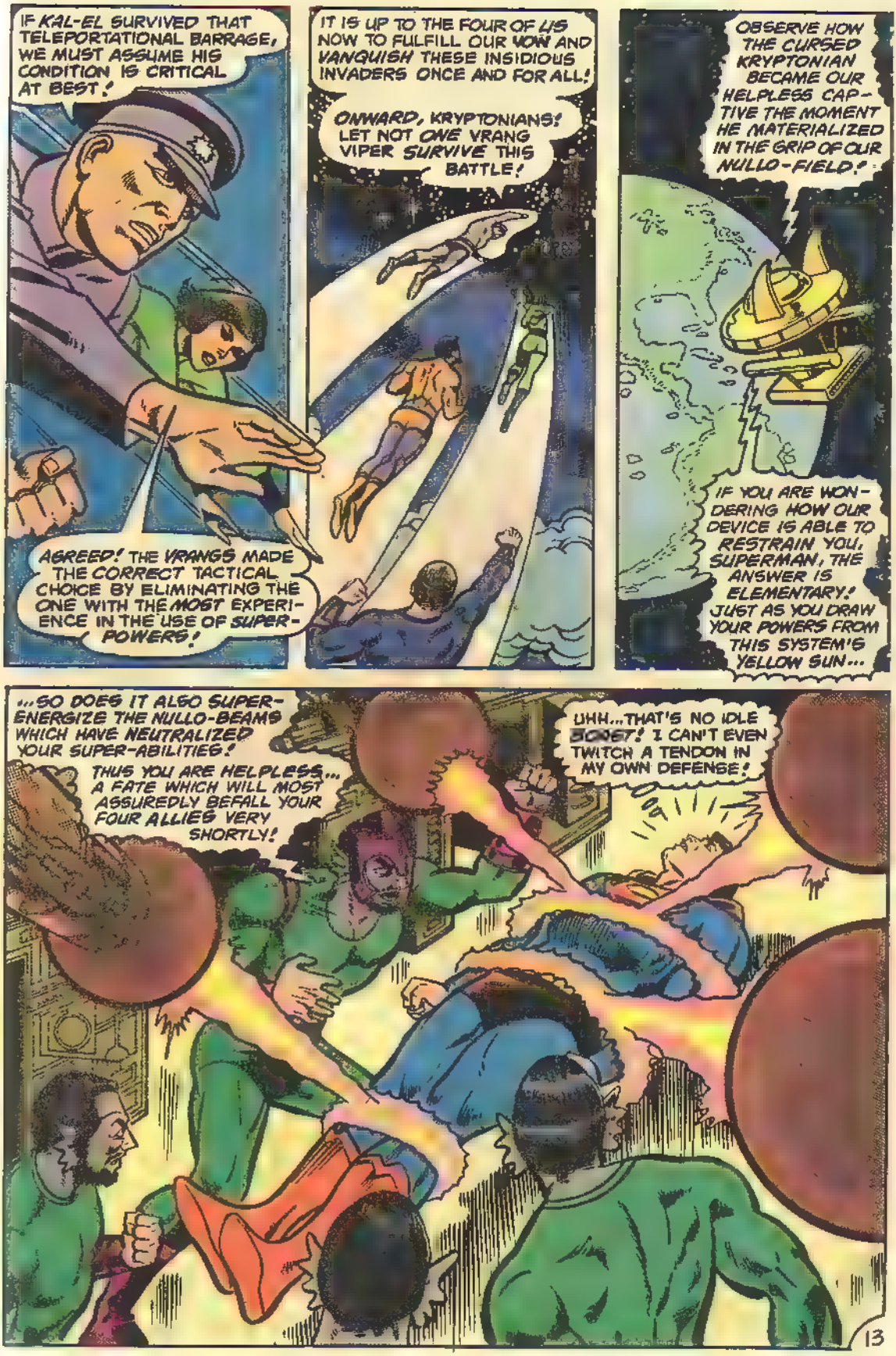
BUT WHEN THE MAN OF MIGHT EMERGES INTO THE AIR WITH HIS PRISONER...
BY RAO! TWO MORE SUPER-KRYPTONIANS! I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED YOU DIDN'T ESCAPE THE PHANTOM ZONE ALONE!
A SUCCESSFUL GENERAL IS ALWAYS PREPARED TO CONSOLIDATE HIS FORCES!

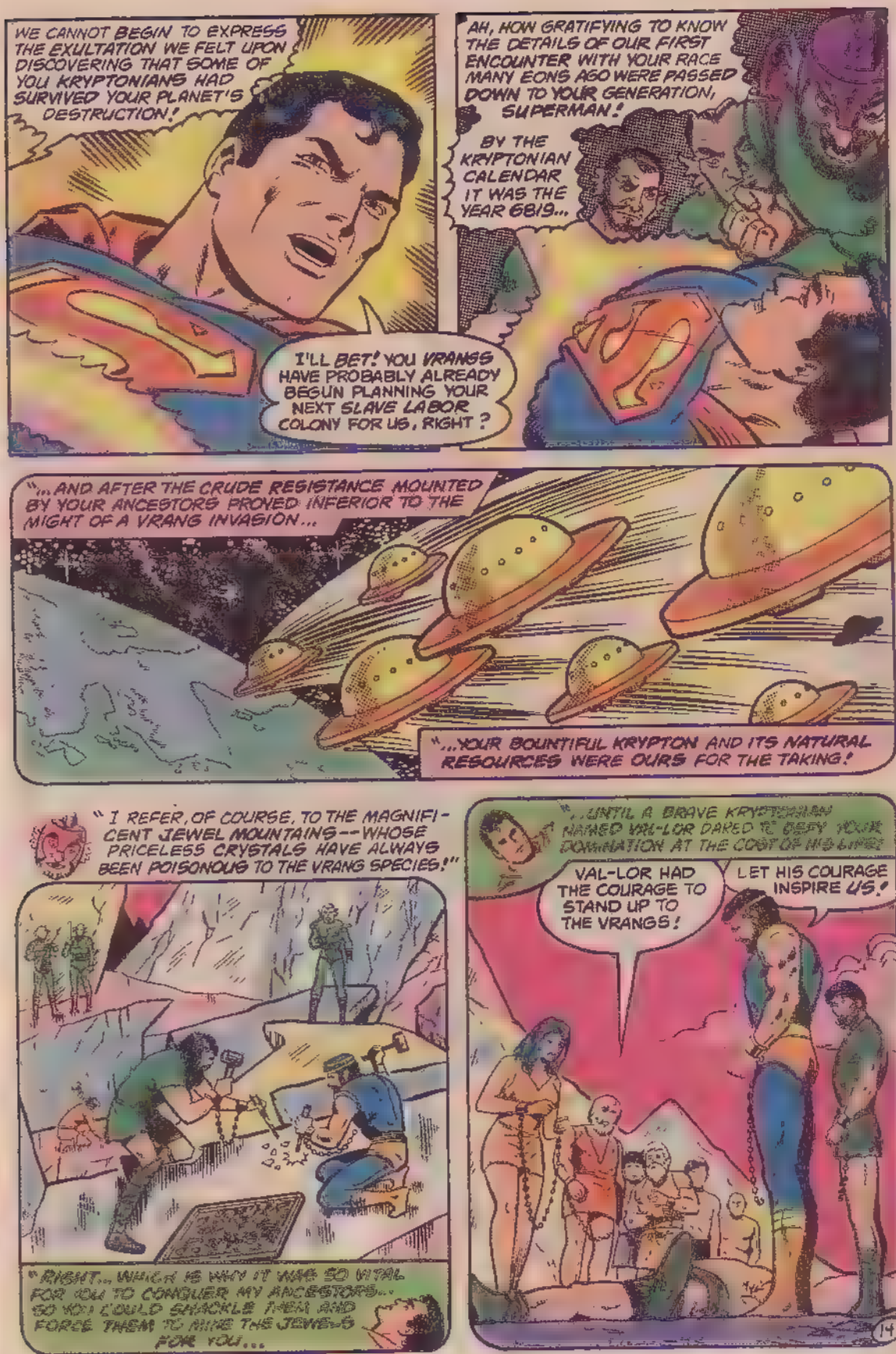
THOK!
WAK
AND AN EXPERIENCED SUPERMAN HAS TO BE ABLE TO MAKE THE MOST OF A CRISIS-SITUATION!
IF I'M FAST ENOUGH, I CAN USE ZOD'S INVULNERABLE BODY TO KNOCK ALL THREE OF MY ADVERSARIES SENSELESS!

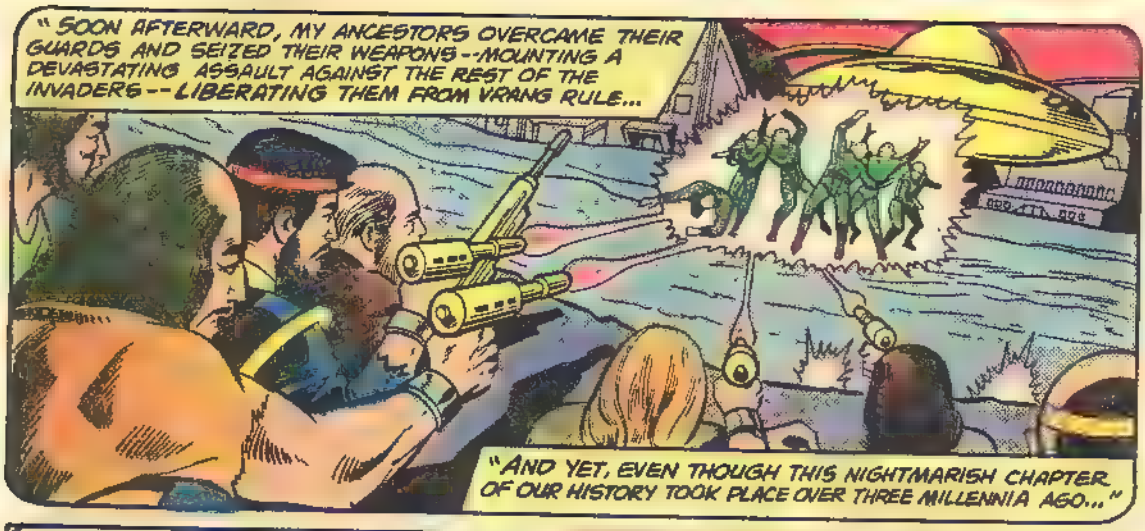

I AM KNOWN FOR MY LETHAL ATTACKS AGAINST MALES, KAL-EL,,, BUT IN THIS CASE, I AM WILLING TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION!
NO! YOU WOULDN'T--
EVEN WHEN YOU ARE OUTNUMBERED, YOU REMAIN A MOST FORMIDABLE FOE,,, FOR A MALE!
EH, THAT COLD, HEARTLESS FEMALE VOICE,,, FAORA!
WHATEVER THEY'RE UP TO, SUPERMAN--DON'T GIVE IN! THEY'RE RUTHLESS KILLERS!
YOU ARE EXCEEDINGLY COURAGEOUS, OR VERY RECKLESS, LOIS LANE! BUT IN EITHER CASE--
--YOU HAVE BEGUN TO BORE ME! I WASH MY HANDS OF YOU!
YIEEE!
LOIS--!
CAN'T GET TO HER IN TIME--HAVE TO BLOW A BARRAGE OF AIR TO CUSHION HER FALL!
THIS IS ONE LIFE THAT SUPERMAN WILL NOT SAVE!

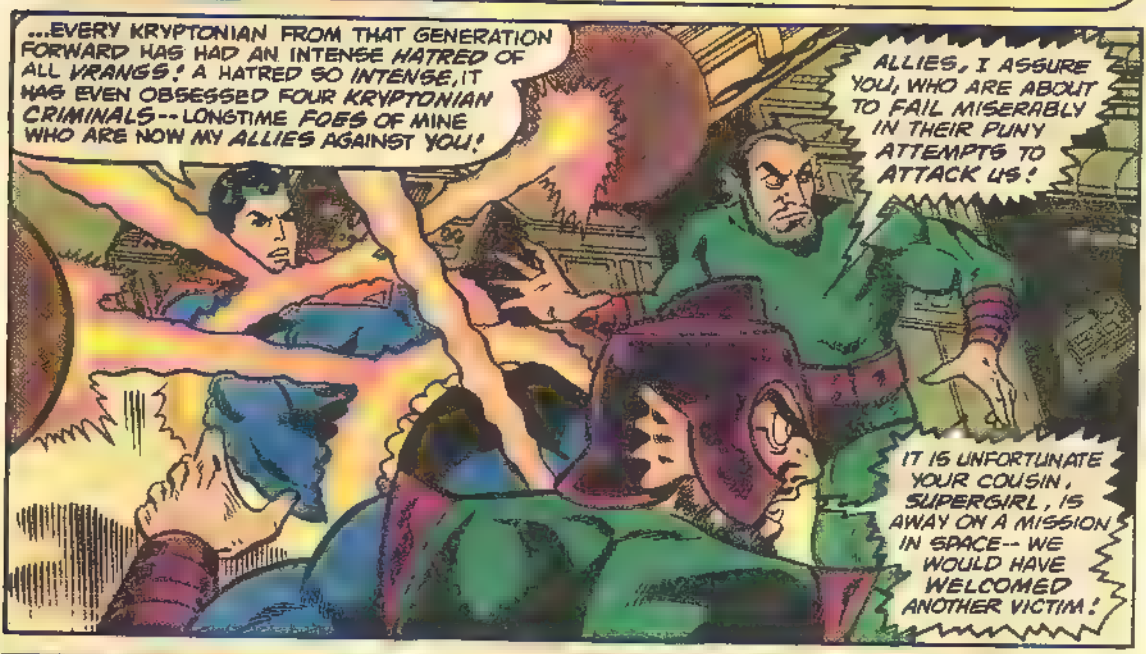

BEFORE THE METROPOLIS MARVEL CAN EMPLOY HIS SUPER-BREATH...
THIS SCENARIO WAS PRE-ARRANGED SO I COULD SAVE LOIS LANE'S LIFE IN FRONT OF YOU, KAL-EL!
WE KNEW ONLY DRASTIC ACTION WOULD MAKE YOU BELIEVE OUR INTENTIONS!
YOUR INTENTIONS, ZOD... HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TO DOMINATE OTHERS AND OBLITERATE ANYONE WHO STANDS IN YOUR WAY!
AND THE REST OF YOU ARE JUST AS RUTHLESS!
ANY OTHER TIME, I WOULD HAVE TAKEN GREAT DELIGHT IN USING HORU-KANU TO CRIPPLE A CAPTIVE AS UNCOOPERATIVE AS LOIS LANE! BUT AS YOU CAN SEE...
...SHE IS UNHARMED! MOST UNORTHODOX BEHAVIOR ON OUR PART, WOULD YOU NOT AGREE?
THAT'S TRUE, SUPERMAN! I GAVE FAORA REASON TO LOSE HER TEMPER...BUT SHE ONLY TOOK ME CAPTIVE...NEVER INJURED ME! MAYBE YOU SHOULD HEAR THEM OUT!
AFTER GENERAL ZOD HAS RECOUNTED THE ACTIVITIES OF THE FOUR KRYPTONIAN CRIMINALS SINCE THEIR ARRIVAL ON EARTH...
...LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT! FOUR HEINOUS PHANTOM ZONE CRIMINALS ESCAPE AND COME TO EARTH--
--ONLY TO ADOPT SECRET IDENTITIES AND DEVOTE THEIR POWERS TO HELPING METROPOLIS CITIZENS FIGHT CRIME?
SORRY, ZOD...BUT THERE'S NO WAY YOU'LL EVER GET ME TO BELIEVE YOU ZONE FELONS HAVE TURNED INTO "BORN AGAIN" DO-GOODERS!
BEFORE WE ESCAPED, WE TOOK A SACRED OATH THAT FORBIDS US TO PERFORM A CRIMINAL ACT OF ANY KIND...UNTIL WE HAVE FULFILLED OUR VOW!
NOT EVEN THE MOST BLOODTHIRSTY AMONG OUR KIND WOULD DARE TAKE THE OATH OF HADRAD IN VAIN--TO DO SO WOULD BE TO DENY OUR SACROSANCT KRYPTONIAN HERITAGE!
AND THE REASON FOR THIS FAR-FETCHED VOW?

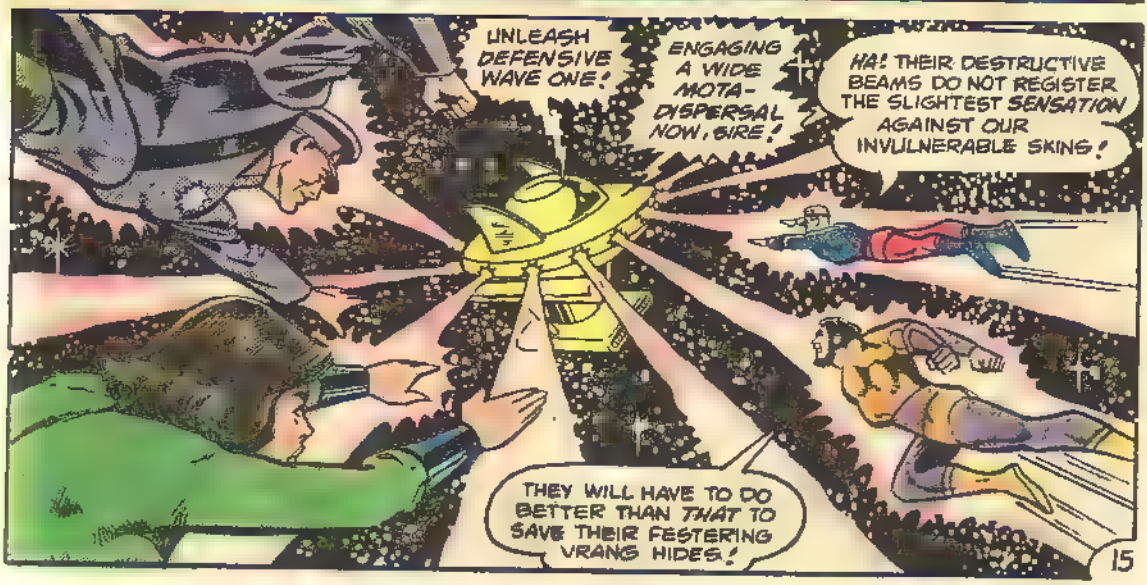

FROM OUR ALL-SEEING VANTAGE POINT IN THE ZONE... WE WITNESSED THE DREAD RE-EMERGENCE OF THE ENEMY WE DESPISE EVEN MORE THAN YOU, SUPERMAN!
WE OBSERVED THEM SETTING OUT ON A COURSE FOR EARTH!
IT BECAME OUR DUTY TO SPEED HERE AND MEET THE ENEMY HEAD-ON!
NOW I AM INTRIGUED! JUST WHO IS THIS MYSTERIOUS FOE THAT MADE ME NUMBER TWO ON YOUR "HIT" PARADE?
THE SCOURGE OF ALL KRYPTONIANS SINCE THEY CONQUERED OUR PLANET LONG AGO-- THOSE MALEVOLENT VIPERS KNOWN AS THE VRANGS!
THE... VRANGS?!!
LOOK OUT!
BY KRYPTON!
THE ENEMY HAS FOUND US!
AND WHERE THE MAN OF STEEL STOOD ONLY A MICRO-SECOND BEFORE...
S-SUPERMAN...? WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU...?
WE MUST HAVE MISCALCULATED THE VELOCITY OF THE VRANG WARSHIP BY AN ENTIRE SOLAR DAY! THEY FIRED UPON US FROM AN EARTH-ORBIT!
THEIR VESSEL'S HULL CONTAINS A LEAD ALLOY WHICH BLOCKS OUR X-RAY VISION FROM OBSERVING SUPERMAN'S FATE!

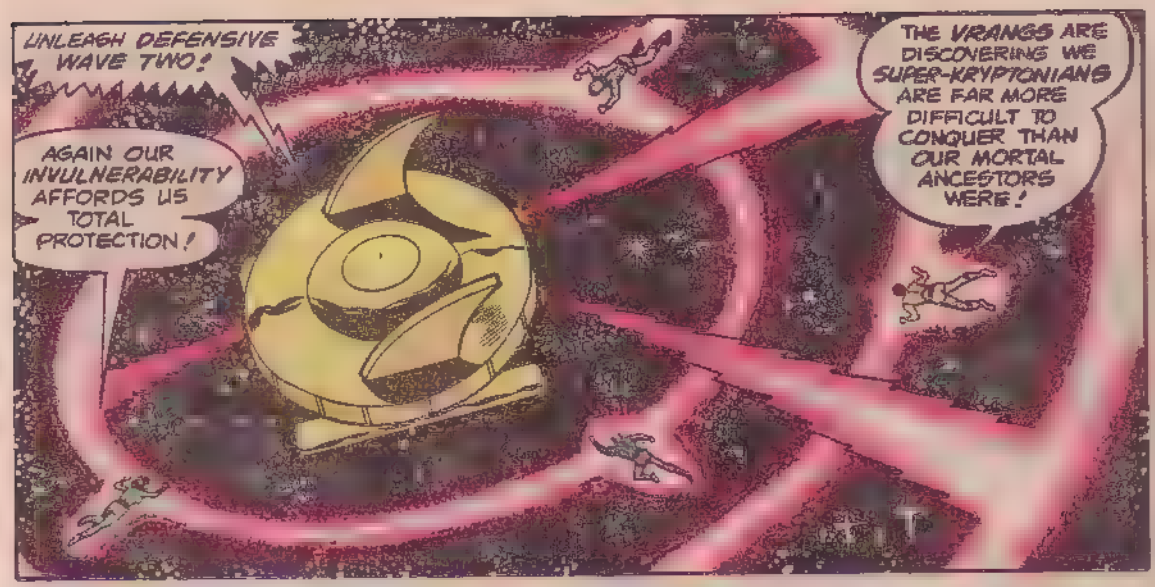

IF KAL-EL SURVIVED THAT TELEPORTATIONAL BARRAGE, WE MUST ASSUME HIS CONDITION IS CRITICAL AT BEST!
AGREED! THE VRANGS MADE THE CORRECT TACTICAL CHOICE BY ELIMINATING THE ONE WITH THE MOST EXPERIENCE IN THE USE OF SUPER-POWERS!
IT IS UP TO THE FOUR OF US NOW TO FULFILL OUR VOW AND VANQUISH THESE INSIDIOUS INVADERS ONCE AND FOR ALL!
ONWARD, KRYPTONIANS! LET NOT ONE VRANG VIPER SURVIVE THIS BATTLE!
OBSERVE HOW THE CURSED KRYPTONIAN BECAME OUR HELPLESS CAPTIVE THE MOMENT HE MATERIALIZED IN THE GRIP OF OUR NULLO-FIELD!
IF YOU ARE WONDERING HOW OUR DEVICE IS ABLE TO RESTRAIN YOU, SUPERMAN, THE ANSWER IS ELEMENTARY! JUST AS YOU DRAW YOUR POWERS FROM THIS SYSTEM'S YELLOW SUN...
...SO DOES IT ALSO SUPER-ENERGIZE THE NULLO-BEAMS WHICH HAVE NEUTRALIZED YOUR SUPER-ABILITIES!
THUS YOU ARE HELPLESS... A FATE WHICH WILL MOST ASSUREDLY BEFALL YOUR FOUR ALLIES VERY SHORTLY!
UHH...THAT'S NO IDLE BOAST! I CAN'T EVEN TWITCH A TENDON IN MY OWN DEFENSE!

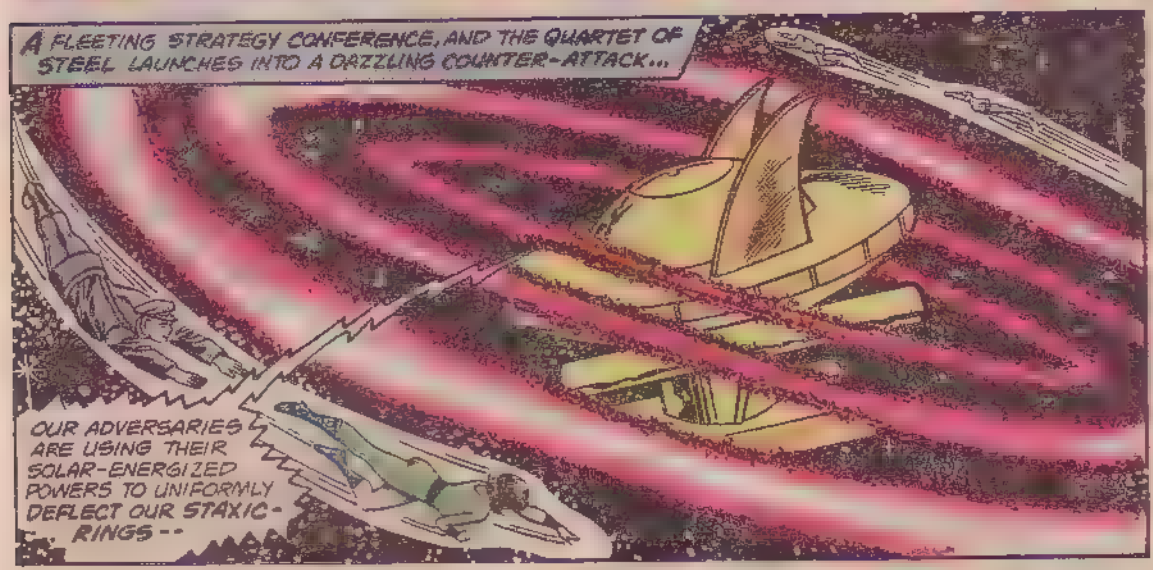

WE CANNOT BEGIN TO EXPRESS THE EXULTATION WE FELT UPON DISCOVERING THAT SOME OF YOU KRYPTONIANS HAD SURVIVED YOUR PLANET'S DESTRUCTION!
I'LL BET! YOU VRANGS HAVE PROBABLY ALREADY BEGUN PLANNING YOUR NEXT SLAVE LABOR COLONY FOR US, RIGHT?
AH, HOW GRATIFYING TO KNOW THE DETAILS OF OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR RACE MANY EONS AGO WERE PASSED DOWN TO YOUR GENERATION, SUPERMAN!
BY THE KRYPTONIAN CALENDAR IT WAS THE YEAR 6819...
"...AND AFTER THE CRUDE RESISTANCE MOUNTED BY YOUR ANCESTORS PROVED INFERIOR TO THE MIGHT OF A VRANG INVASION...
"...YOUR BOUNTIFUL KRYPTON AND ITS NATURAL RESOURCES WERE OURS FOR THE TAKING!
"I REFER, OF COURSE, TO THE MAGNIFICENT JEWEL MOUNTAINS--WHOSE PRICELESS CRYSTALS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN POISONOUS TO THE VRANG SPECIES!"
"RIGHT... WHICH IS WHY IT WAS SO VITAL FOR YOU TO CONQUER MY ANCESTORS... SO YOU COULD SHACKLE THEM AND FORCE THEM TO MINE THE JEWELS FOR YOU...
"...UNTIL A BRAVE KRYPTONIAN NAMED VAL-LOR DARED TO DEFY YOUR DOMINATION AT THE COST OF HIS LIFE!
VAL-LOR HAD THE COURAGE TO STAND UP TO THE VRANGS!
LET HIS COURAGE INSPIRE US!
14

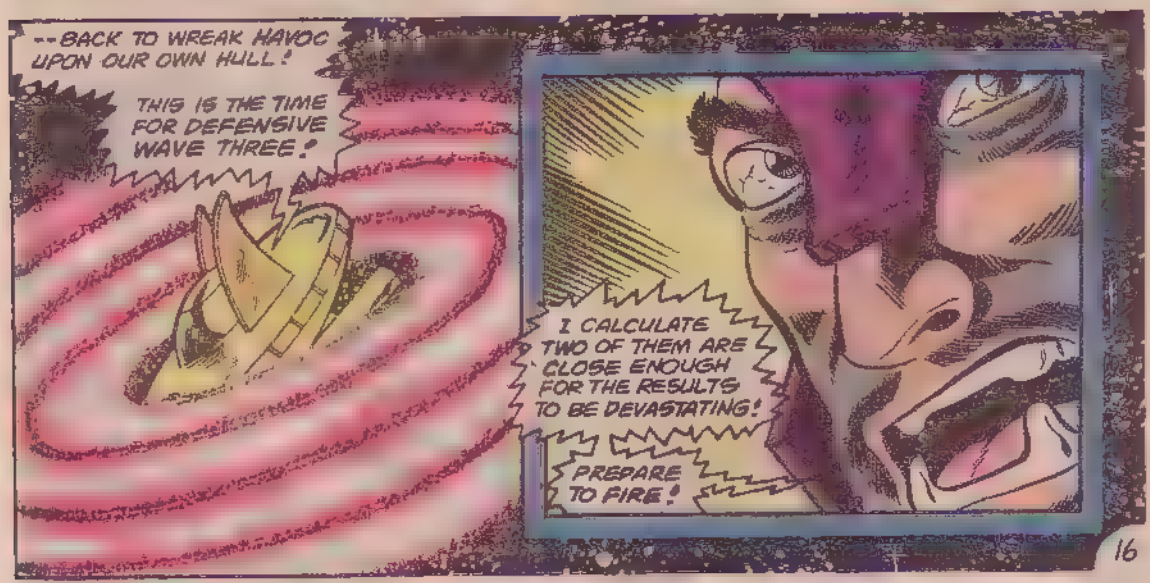

"SOON AFTERWARD, MY ANCESTORS OVERCAME THEIR GUARDS AND SEIZED THEIR WEAPONS--MOUNTING A DEVASTATING ASSAULT AGAINST THE REST OF THE INVADERS--LIBERATING THEM FROM VRANG RULE...
"AND YET, EVEN THOUGH THIS NIGHTMARISH CHAPTER OF OUR HISTORY TOOK PLACE OVER THREE MILLENNIA AGO..."


...EVERY KRYPTONIAN FROM THAT GENERATION FORWARD HAS HAD AN INTENSE HATRED OF ALL VRANGS! A HATRED SO INTENSE, IT HAS EVEN OBSESSED FOUR KRYPTONIAN CRIMINALS--LONGTIME FOES OF MINE WHO ARE NOW MY ALLIES AGAINST YOU!
ALLIES, I ASSURE YOU, WHO ARE ABOUT TO FAIL MISERABLY IN THEIR PUNY ATTEMPTS TO ATTACK US!
IT IS UNFORTUNATE YOUR COUSIN, SUPERGIRL, IS AWAY ON A MISSION IN SPACE-- WE WOULD HAVE WELCOMED ANOTHER VICTIM!


UNLEASH DEFENSIVE WAVE ONE!
ENGAGING A WIDE MOTA-DISPERSAL NOW, SIRE!
HA! THEIR DESTRUCTIVE BEAMS DO NOT REGISTER THE SLIGHTEST SENSATION AGAINST OUR INVULNERABLE SKINS!
THEY WILL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT TO SAVE THEIR FESTERING VRANG HIDES!

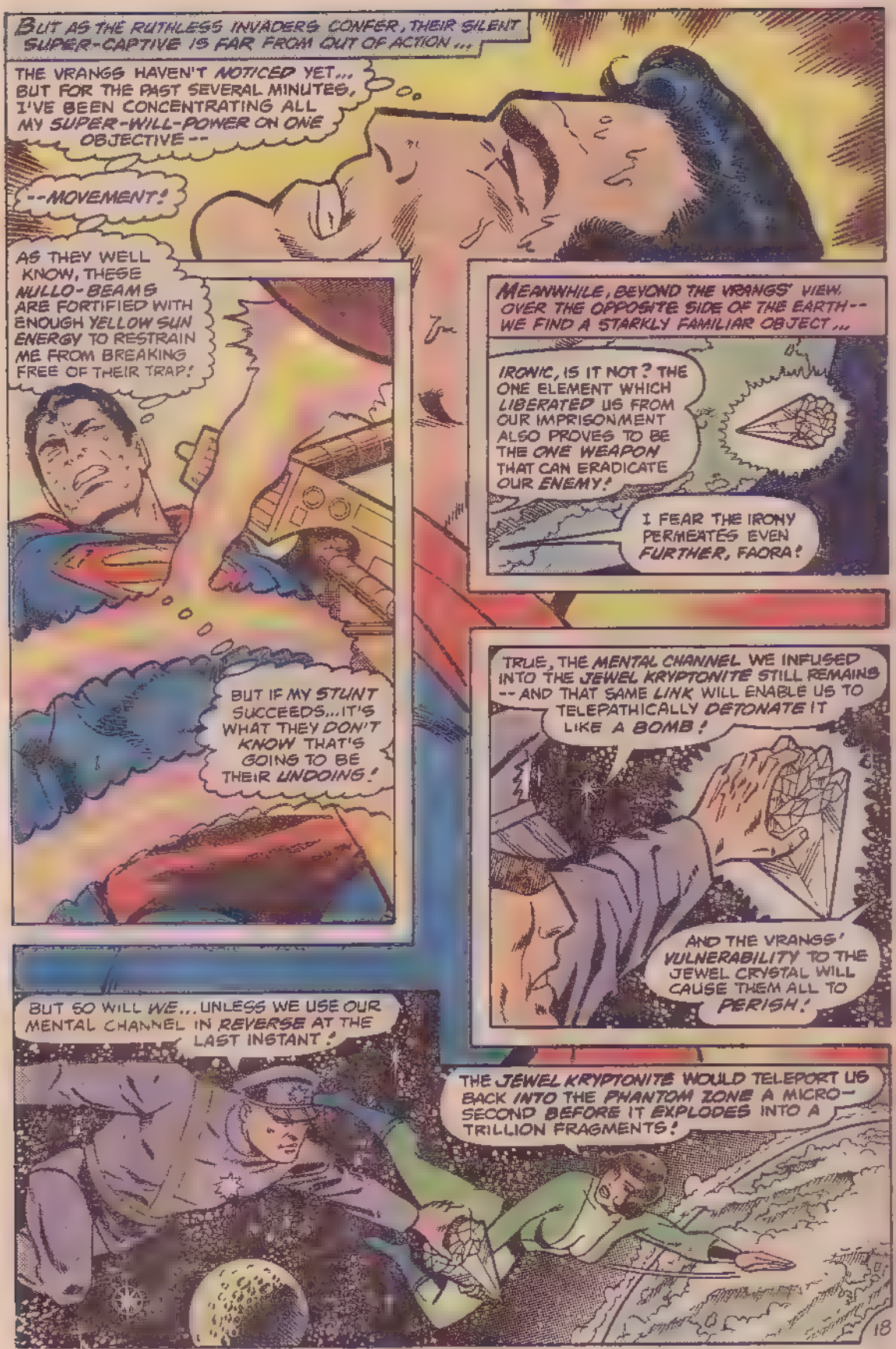

UNLEASH DEFENSIVE WAVE TWO!
AGAIN OUR INVULNERABILITY AFFORDS US TOTAL PROTECTION!
THE VRANGS ARE DISCOVERING WE SUPER-KRYPTONIANS ARE FAR MORE DIFFICULT TO CONQUER THAN OUR MORTAL ANCESTORS WERE!

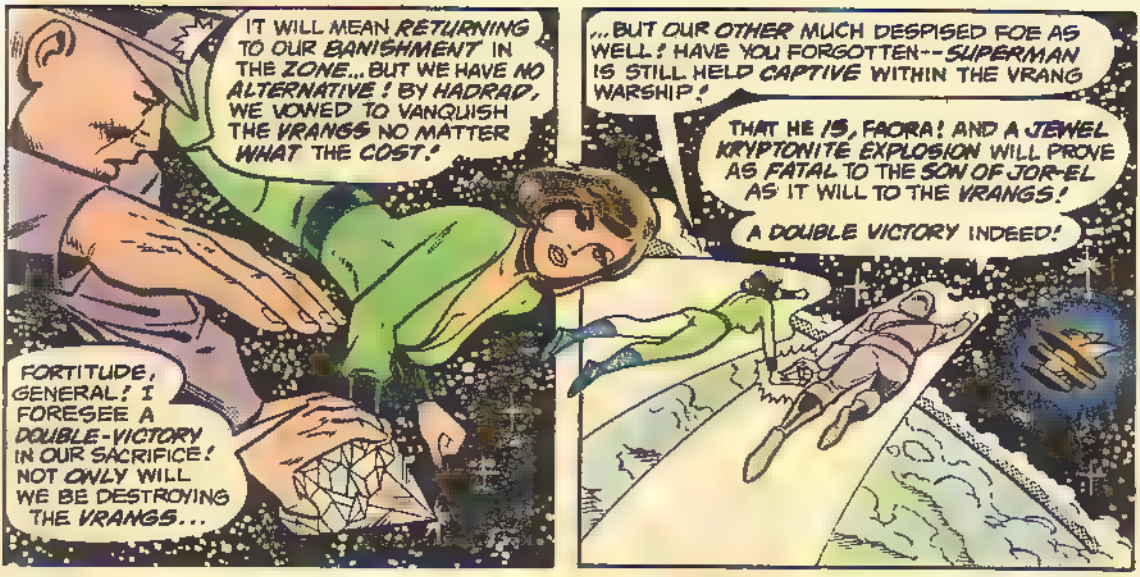

A FLEETING STRATEGY CONFERENCE, AND THE QUARTET OF STEEL LAUNCHES INTO A DAZZLING COUNTER-ATTACK...
OUR ADVERSARIES ARE USING THEIR SOLAR-ENERGIZED POWERS TO UNIFORMLY DEFLECT OUR STAXIC-RINGS--

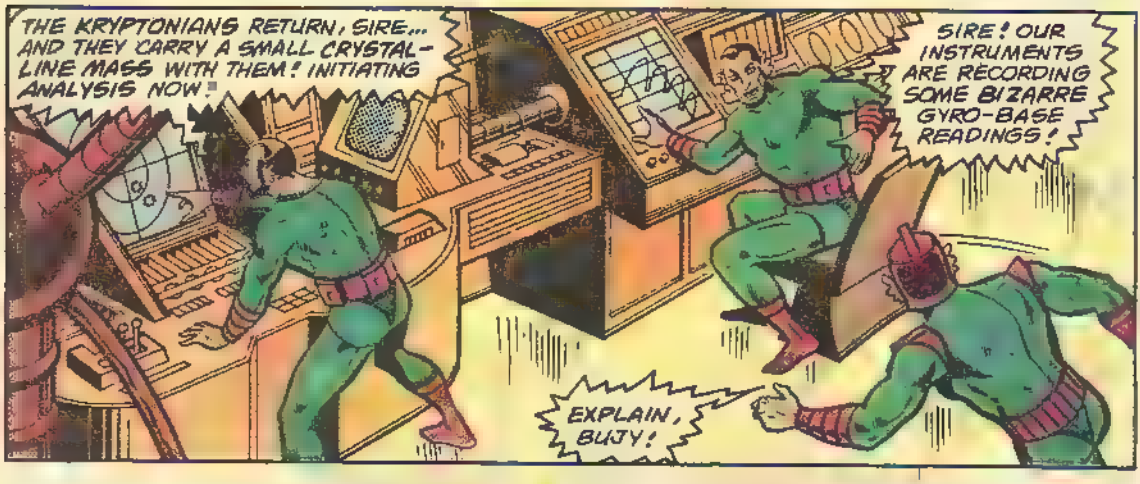

--BACK TO WREAK HAVOC UPON OUR OWN HULL!
THIS IS THE TIME FOR DEFENSIVE WAVE THREE!
I CALCULATE TWO OF THEM ARE CLOSE ENOUGH FOR THE RESULTS TO BE DEVASTATING!
PREPARE TO FIRE!

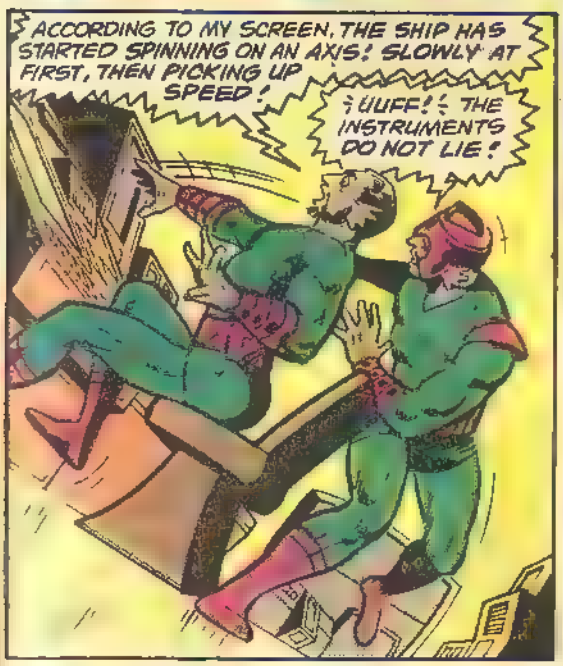
THE NEXT EXPLOSIVE MOMENT...
YAAARGHH!
HEYAAHHH!
WE WERE TRICKED! THE FIRST TWO BARRAGES WERE MERELY FOR SHOW-- TO LURE US INTO A FALSE SENSE OF CONFIDENCE!
MURKK AND TYB-OL WERE OBLITERATED BY A WEAPON WHICH STRUCK THEM DOWN INVISIBLY WITHOUT LEAVING A TRACE!
THE VRANGS ARE MORE DECEITFUL THAN EVER!
A FACT WHICH THE MAN OF MIGHT ALSO TAKES INTO ACCOUNT...
YOU MONSTERS! YOU WERE SAVING A SURPRISE MURDER WEAPON --SUPER-ENERGIZED BY THE YELLOW SUN TO BE FATAL!
MOST ASTUTE, SUPERMAN! BUT BE ASSURED--WE WILL RESERVE YOUR DEATH FOR LAST!
I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE THINKING, GENERAL! WITH SUPERMAN TAKEN CAPTIVE,, MURKK AND TYB-OL DESTROYED,, OUR OPTIONS HAVE DWINDLED!
I MUST CONCUR, FAORA!
WE HAVE NO CHOICE NOW BUT TO EMPLOY OUR OWN SECRET WEAPON TO WIPE OUT THE VRANG MENACE ONCE AND FOR ALL!
THE TWO REMAINING KRYPTONIANS HAVE FLED OUT OF OUR RANGE!
NO DOUBT TO FORMULATE SOME NEW STRATEGY WHICH WILL PROVE INEFFECTIVE AGAINST OUR SUPERIOR MIGHT!

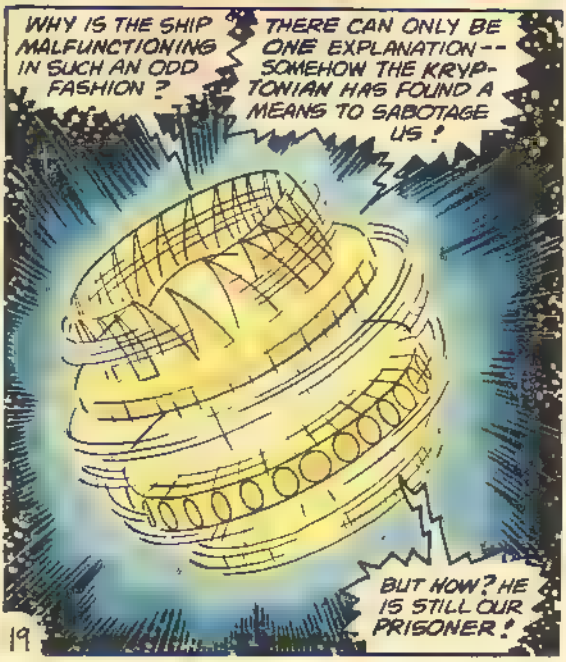
CONTINUED ON 3RD FOLLOWING

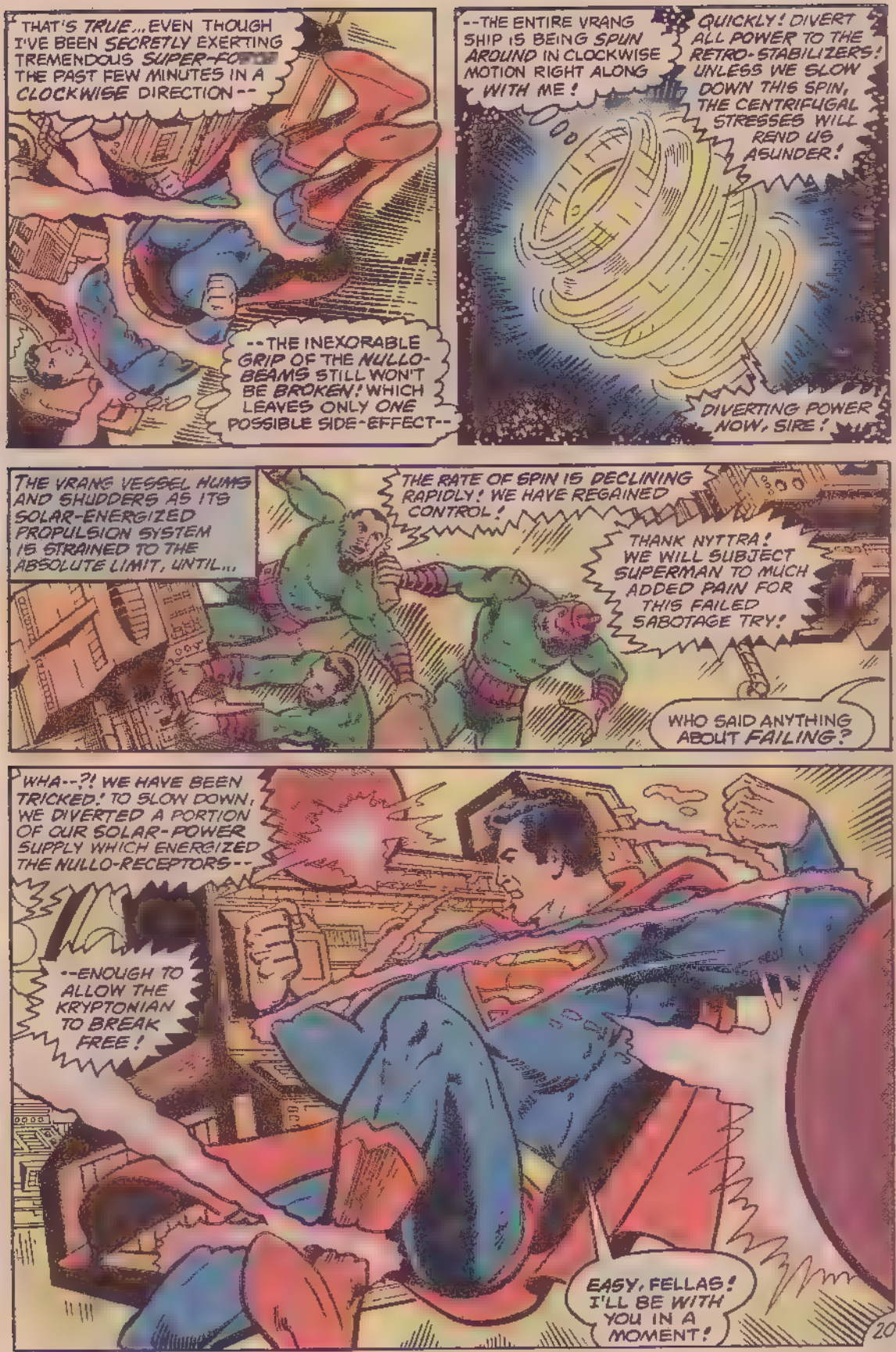

BUT AS THE RUTHLESS INVADERS CONFER, THEIR SILENT SUPER-CAPTIVE IS FAR FROM OUT OF ACTION...
THE VRANGS HAVEN'T NOTICED YET... BUT FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MINUTES, I'VE BEEN CONCENTRATING ALL MY SUPER-WILL-POWER ON ONE OBJECTIVE --
--MOVEMENT!
AS THEY WELL KNOW, THESE NULLO-BEAMS ARE FORTIFIED WITH ENOUGH YELLOW SUN ENERGY TO RESTRAIN ME FROM BREAKING FREE OF THEIR TRAP!
BUT IF MY STUNT SUCCEEDS... IT'S WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW THAT'S GOING TO BE THEIR UNDOING!
MEANWHILE, BEYOND THE VRANGS' VIEW, OVER THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE EARTH -- WE FIND A STARKLY FAMILIAR OBJECT...
IRONIC, IS IT NOT? THE ONE ELEMENT WHICH LIBERATED US FROM OUR IMPRISONMENT ALSO PROVES TO BE THE ONE WEAPON THAT CAN ERADICATE OUR ENEMY!
I FEAR THE IRONY PERMEATES EVEN FURTHER, FAORA!
TRUE, THE MENTAL CHANNEL WE INFUSED INTO THE JEWEL KRYPTONITE STILL REMAINS -- AND THAT SAME LINK WILL ENABLE US TO TELEPATHICALLY DETONATE IT LIKE A BOMB!
AND THE VRANGS' VULNERABILITY TO THE JEWEL CRYSTAL WILL CAUSE THEM ALL TO PERISH!
BUT SO WILL WE... UNLESS WE USE OUR MENTAL CHANNEL IN REVERSE AT THE LAST INSTANT!
THE JEWEL KRYPTONITE WOULD TELEPORT US BACK INTO THE PHANTOM ZONE A MICRO-SECOND BEFORE IT EXPLODES INTO A TRILLION FRAGMENTS!


IT WILL MEAN RETURNING TO OUR BANISHMENT IN THE ZONE... BUT WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE! BY HADRAD, WE VOWED TO VANQUISH THE VRANGS NO MATTER WHAT THE COST!
FORTITUDE, GENERAL! I FORESEE A DOUBLE-VICTORY IN OUR SACRIFICE! NOT ONLY WILL WE BE DESTROYING THE VRANGS...
...BUT OUR OTHER MUCH DESPISED FOE AS WELL! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN--SUPERMAN IS STILL HELD CAPTIVE WITHIN THE VRANG WARSHIP!
THAT HE IS, FAORA! AND A JEWEL KRYPTONITE EXPLOSION WILL PROVE AS FATAL TO THE SON OF JOR-EL AS IT WILL TO THE VRANGS!
A DOUBLE VICTORY INDEED!


THE KRYPTONIANS RETURN, SIRE... AND THEY CARRY A SMALL CRYSTALLINE MASS WITH THEM! INITIATING ANALYSIS NOW!
SIRE! OUR INSTRUMENTS ARE RECORDING SOME BIZARRE GYRO-BASE READINGS!
EXPLAIN, BUJY!


ACCORDING TO MY SCREEN, THE SHIP HAS STARTED SPINNING ON AN AXIS! SLOWLY AT FIRST, THEN PICKING UP SPEED!
¡UUFF!¡ THE INSTRUMENTS DO NOT LIE!


WHY IS THE SHIP MALFUNCTIONING IN SUCH AN ODD FASHION?
THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE EXPLANATION -- SOMEHOW THE KRYPTONIAN HAS FOUND A MEANS TO SABOTAGE US!
BUT NOW? HE IS STILL OUR PRISONER!


THAT'S TRUE... EVEN THOUGH I'VE BEEN SECRETLY EXERTING TREMENDOUS SUPER-FORCE THE PAST FEW MINUTES IN A CLOCKWISE DIRECTION--
--THE INEXORABLE GRIP OF THE NULLO-BEAMS STILL WON'T BE BROKEN! WHICH LEAVES ONLY ONE POSSIBLE SIDE-EFFECT--
--THE ENTIRE VRANG SHIP IS BEING SPUN AROUND IN CLOCKWISE MOTION RIGHT ALONG WITH ME!
QUICKLY! DIVERT ALL POWER TO THE RETRO-STABILIZERS! UNLESS WE SLOW DOWN THIS SPIN, THE CENTRIFUGAL STRESSES WILL REND US ASUNDER!
DIVERTING POWER NOW, SIRE!
THE VRANG VESSEL HUMS AND SHUDDERS AS ITS SOLAR-ENERGIZED PROPULSION SYSTEM IS STRAINED TO THE ABSOLUTE LIMIT, UNTIL...
THE RATE OF SPIN IS DECLINING RAPIDLY! WE HAVE REGAINED CONTROL!
THANK NYTTRA! WE WILL SUBJECT SUPERMAN TO MUCH ADDED PAIN FOR THIS FAILED SABOTAGE TRY!
WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT FAILING?
WHA--?! WE HAVE BEEN TRICKED! TO SLOW DOWN, WE DIVERTED A PORTION OF OUR SOLAR-POWER SUPPLY WHICH ENERGIZED THE NULLO-RECEPTORS--
--ENOUGH TO ALLOW THE KRYPTONIAN TO BREAK FREE!
EASY, FELLAS! I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MOMENT!

BUT ANOTHER THREAT, EVEN MORE OMINOUS, SUDDENLY BECOMES APPARENT...
SIRE! SENSORS HAVE IDENTIFIED THE CRYSTALLINE MASS THE OTHERS CARRY TOWARD US--IT IS A RADIO-ACTIVE ISOTOPE OF JEWEL MOUNTAIN CRYSTAL FROM KRYPTON!
NO! IT CANNOT BE!
IN KRYPTONITE FORM, IT WILL EVEN BE MORE DEADLY TO US THAN BEFORE!
WE MUST SHOOT THEM DOWN AT ALL COSTS!
FIRING A WIDE DISPERSAL AT THE ENEMY, SIRE!
FREE AT LAST! NOW TO MAKE SURE ZOD AND FAORA DON'T FALL VICTIM TO VRANG WEAPONS THE WAY MURKK AND TYB-OL DID!
I DON'T KNOW WHY THEY BROUGHT ALONG THEIR JEWEL KRYPTONITE, BUT I'M NOT COMPLAINING--
--IT'S THE ONE SUBSTANCE THE VRANGS OBVIOUSLY FEAR!
UUNUUF!
UUHHNN!
EEYUHH!

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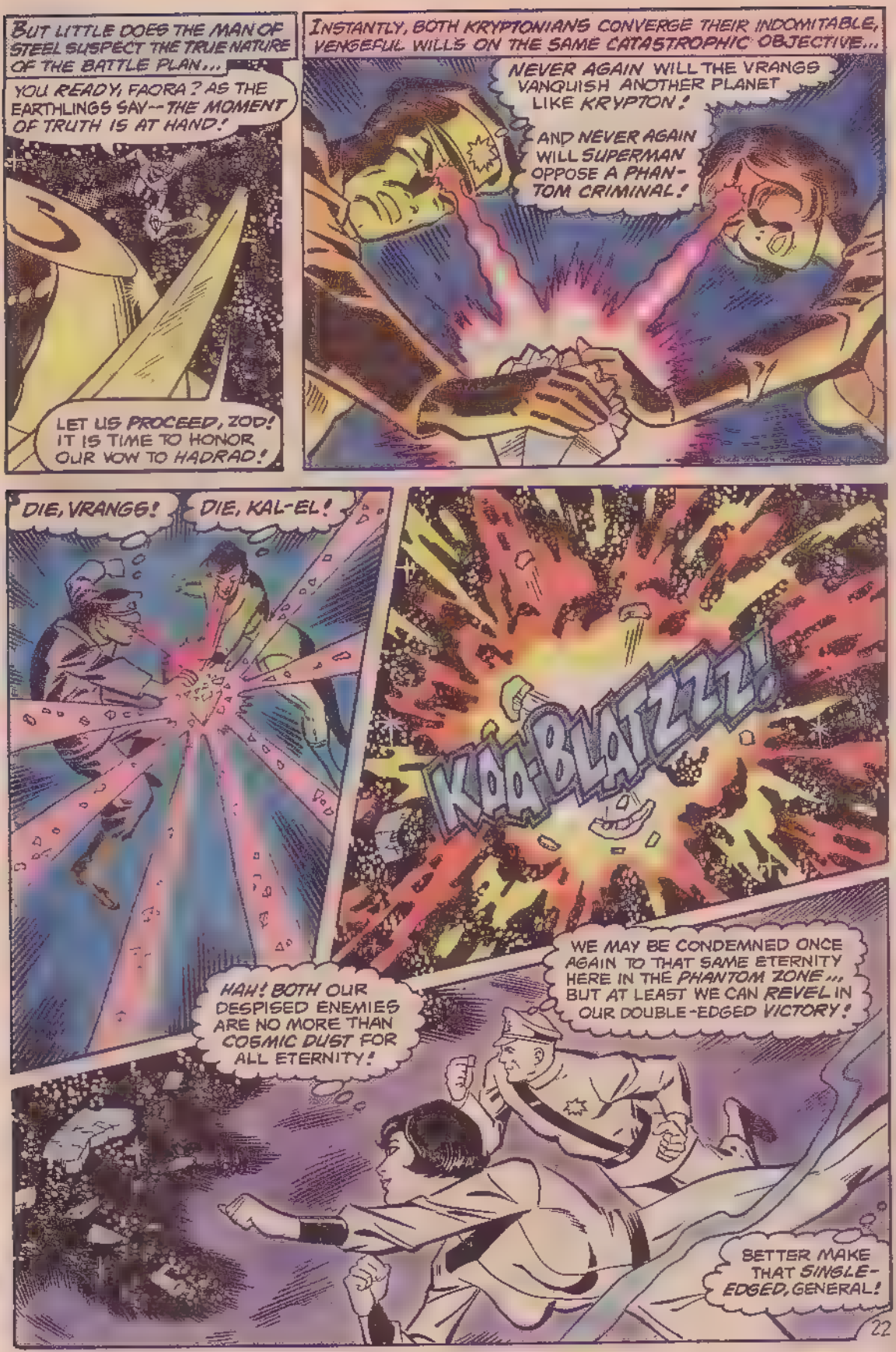
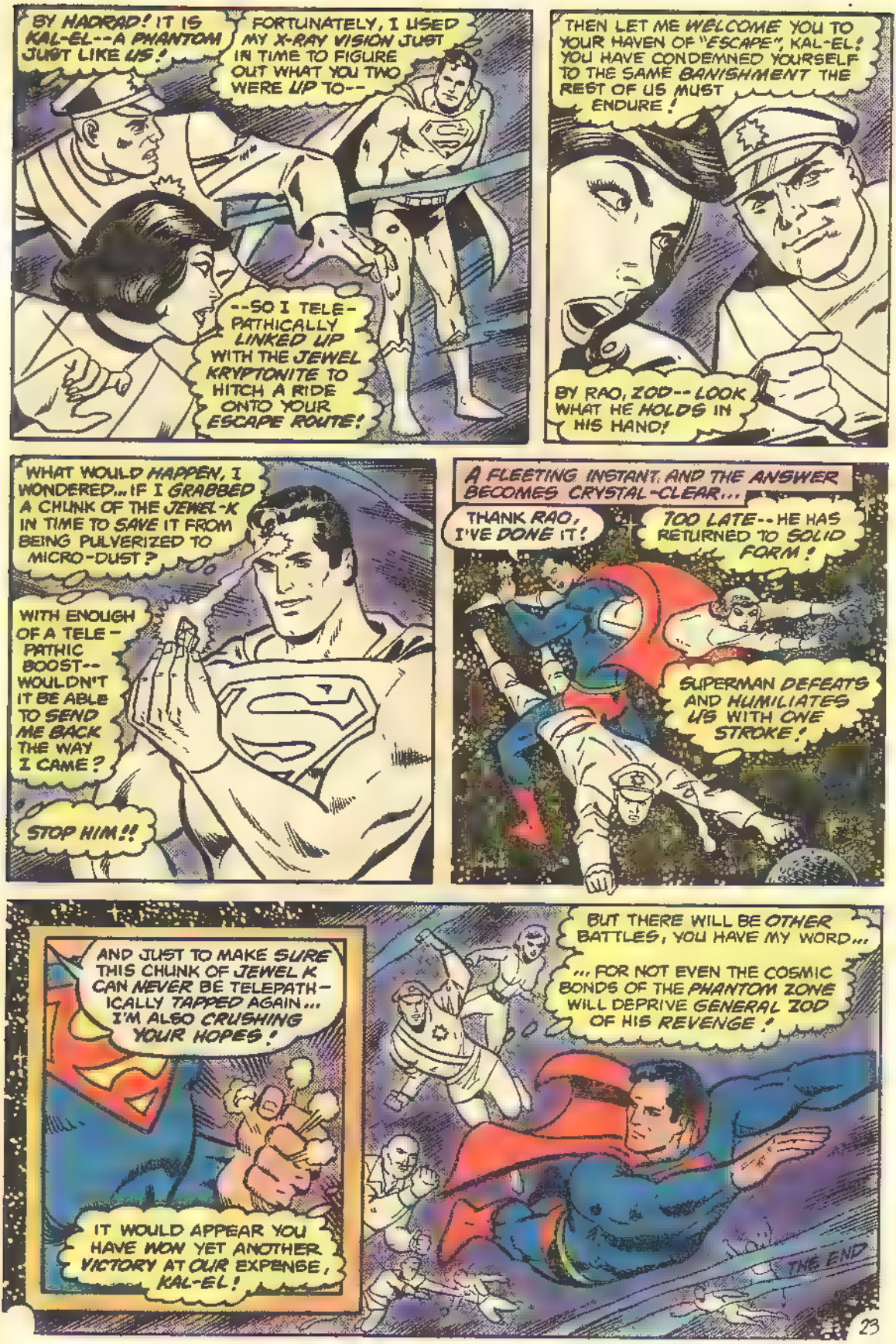
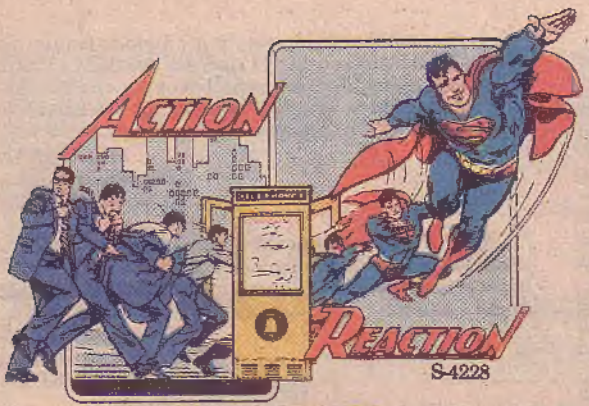

BUT LITTLE DOES THE MAN OF STEEL SUSPECT THE TRUE NATURE OF THE BATTLE PLAN...
YOU READY, FAORA? AS THE EARTHLINGS SAY--THE MOMENT OF TRUTH IS AT HAND!
LET US PROCEED, ZOD! IT IS TIME TO HONOR OUR VOW TO HADRAD!
INSTANTLY, BOTH KRYPTONIANS CONVERGE THEIR INDOMITABLE, VENGEFUL WILLS ON THE SAME CATASTROPHIC OBJECTIVE...
NEVER AGAIN WILL THE VRANGS VANQUISH ANOTHER PLANET LIKE KRYPTON!
AND NEVER AGAIN WILL SUPERMAN OPPOSE A PHANTOM CRIMINAL!
DIE, VRANGS!
DIE, KAL-EL!
KOA-BLATZZZ!
HAH! BOTH OUR DESPISED ENEMIES ARE NO MORE THAN COSMIC DUST FOR ALL ETERNITY!
WE MAY BE CONDEMNED ONCE AGAIN TO THAT SAME ETERNITY HERE IN THE PHANTOM ZONE... BUT AT LEAST WE CAN REVEL IN OUR DOUBLE-EDGED VICTORY!
BETTER MAKE THAT SINGLE-EDGED, GENERAL!


BY HADRAD! IT IS KAL-EL--A PHANTOM JUST LIKE US!
FORTUNATELY, I USED MY X-RAY VISION JUST IN TIME TO FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU TWO WERE UP TO--
--SO I TELE-PATHICALLY LINKED UP WITH THE JEWEL KRYPTONITE TO HITCH A RIDE ONTO YOUR ESCAPE ROUTE!
THEN LET ME WELCOME YOU TO YOUR HAVEN OF "ESCAPE", KAL-EL! YOU HAVE CONDEMNED YOURSELF TO THE SAME BANISHMENT THE REST OF US MUST ENDURE!
BY RAO, ZOD-- LOOK WHAT HE HOLDS IN HIS HAND!
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN, I WONDERED... IF I GRABBED A CHUNK OF THE JEWEL-K IN TIME TO SAVE IT FROM BEING PULVERIZED TO MICRO-DUST?
WITH ENOUGH OF A TELE-PATHIC BOOST-- WOULDN'T IT BE ABLE TO SEND ME BACK THE WAY I CAME?
STOP HIM!!
A FLEETING INSTANT, AND THE ANSWER BECOMES CRYSTAL-CLEAR...
THANK RAO, I'VE DONE IT!
TOO LATE-- HE HAS RETURNED TO SOLID FORM!
SUPERMAN DEFEATS AND HUMILIATES US WITH ONE STROKE!
AND JUST TO MAKE SURE THIS CHUNK OF JEWEL K CAN NEVER BE TELEPATH-ICALLY TAPPED AGAIN... I'M ALSO CRUSHING YOUR HOPES!
IT WOULD APPEAR YOU HAVE WON YET ANOTHER VICTORY AT OUR EXPENSE, KAL-EL!
BUT THERE WILL BE OTHER BATTLES, YOU HAVE MY WORD...
... FOR NOT EVEN THE COSMIC BONDS OF THE PHANTOM ZONE WILL DEPRIVE GENERAL ZOD OF HIS REVENGE!
THE END



DC COMICS, INC., 666 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10103

Dear Editor,

I never liked *Superman* before, but with Marv Wolfman writing it—Wow! What more need I say?

But the art. Aaarrrggh! Bring back Curt Swan. Gil Kane is like Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and Klaus Janson rolled into one. (I *don't* consider that a compliment!) Still, Marv's writing is powerful enough to keep me coming back issue after issue. I really like this Brainiac plotline, but try not to drag it out as long as the split-*Superman* series, okay?

Why the change in print on the letter column?

D.M. PRATT
155 Jean Terrace
Union, NJ 07083

.....I'll make this short: I DON'T LIKE BRAINIAC'S NEW FORM!!!!! (Though Gil Kane's art made it seem a little better than last issue.)

I *do* like the letters page type. It reminds me of the type used years ago.

KEVIN T. BROWN
7846 F. W. Lawrence Avenue
Norridge, IL 60656

The new old typeface is called Schoolbook and Julie decided to change over to it because he felt it was more readable than the previous one (called Megaron). As for Gil's art and Brainiac's new form, you two guys are just the "tip of the iceberg". Onward!—BR

*****

Dear Julie,

ACTION COMICS is really becoming fun to read again and all the credit must go to Marv Wolfman and Gil Kane. Gil is so powerful an artist that his *Superman* just explodes across the page. He just can't get enough credit for all the wonderful things he's doing. Marv, too, is showing that there is more to him than just the *Teen Titans*. They're a tough act to follow, but he's doing a fine job!

I loved #546. The guest stars were great and the Clark Kent scenes were nice. I loved page 7 where all the heroes gathered together. I miss the days when *Kid Flash* used to pal around with *The Flash*, so this was a nice reunion. I liked the continuity of *Kid Flash*'s school-over-heroics problem. Consistency is always important. Personally, I'd rather run a million miles an hour than listen to some boring professor, but I guess Wally West can't do both. I don't see why not, though... he's fast enough!

I really liked Clark throwing it back in Morgan Edge's face. Any time Clark shows backbone, I'm for it. I think Gil draws a mean Clark Kent, by the way.

MARK WALDMAN
9639 Amigo Avenue
Northridge, CA 91324

Talk about being fast, Mark! Your letter came in while we were still getting the mail on ACTION #545... the issue this column is supposed to be about! So, let's get back on the track and leave #546 till next issue!—BR

*****

Dear Editor,

ACTION #545 was breathtaking visually—I'm regularly buying the book again now that Gil Kane is handling the art chores—but the never-let-up pace made the issue a very quick read. It was almost entirely action with one page of characterization (20) and one page of sub-plot (21) thrown in to break up the monotony. I expect a bit more of Marv Wolfman! His *Teen Titans* work is so complex and multi-layered and takes awhile to get through as I soak in the story and art.

Admittedly, a lot of younger kids read *Superman*, but that doesn't mean they're illiterate or can't tolerate depth. A lot of younger readers also like the *Titans;* they deserve the same respect here. (Maybe I'm just being a little premature since this is the second part of a three-part story and, after reading it in a few minutes, I have to wait thirty days for the next part.)

So this isn't really a harsh complaint. *Superman* has never looked so good. Much as I love Curt Swan's definitive version, Gil Kane's Man of Steel bursts off every page!

JOHN K. AUSTIN
S604 Jefferson #6
Spokane, WA 99204

*****

Dear Julie,

I have read many issues of *ACTION COMICS*, but this is the first time I'm writing about them. I've been reading DC comics since the sixties and I must admit you've come a long way since then, of course for the better.

Finally I am prompted to remark on my favorite DC mag, *ACTION COMICS.* Marv Wolfman is among the best writers in the business. But recently you've been using Gil Kane on the art. I hate to say it, but I think his is the worst art there is. I refuse to look at the way he draws Clark Kent with his glasses always looking as if they're not on his face. There are too many lines in Kane's artwork and this is not the *Superman* I have known for all these years. I don't want to hurt any feelings, but I'm writing as a loyal reader. Let's strive for excellence again: Bring back Curt Swan!

JOHN HARITOS
PO Box 220
Ronkonkoma, NY 11779

*****

Dear Julie and Bob,

I really liked *ACTION* #545 a lot. I love the changes in Brainiac. He has become more malevolent, more fear-causing, which is good. He's no longer a pushover. He'll give *Superman* a run for the money now! In fact, I'm beginning to wonder if *Superman* can beat him! The Man of Steel is definitely in trouble now!

Just a comment on the art: TERRIFIC!!! I love the change. Curt Swan is good, but Gil Kane is great! I'd like to see someone like Frank McLaughlin or Mike DeCarlo ink Gil's work just once. That would make it better than great!

DAN CHANEY
PO Box 686
Hinkley, IL

*****

Dear Julius,

Two years ago you could not have gotten me to read an issue of *ACTION COMICS* on a bet, but now it is one of the comics I never miss. Why? The answer is easy: Marv Wolfman, Gil Kane, and a new sense of realism.

I am the ultimate Gil Kane fan, but I think he gets a bit carried away at times. He needs an inker. (What I'd give to see Dan Adkins or Dick Giordano ink this book!) But that's a minor point. Keep up the great work.

MARC LEVINE
13813 N. Gate Drive
Layhill, MD 20906

*****

Dear Editor,

I would first like to say that I enjoy some of the changes that have taken place in this book. It's about time Clark Kent existed as something more than a milksop to be run over when danger threatens. He and Lana Lang together are great. I like the bloodthirstiness of the new Brainiac too. In fact, the only thing I find wrong with the magazine now is the artist!

I'm referring to Gil Kane. When are you guys going to buy him some art lessons? His *SUPERMAN SPECIAL* looked like a multi-colored mud puddle. The story was great, but the art destroyed the quality of it.

Please put Curt Swan back on this book. While Mr. Kane does have a distinctive style easily recognized, his effort to maintain that style renders his art scrambled and unworthy of a magazine as fine as *ACTION COMICS*.

GEORGE E. WILLIAMS JR.
1145 Tamarack
Carlsbad, CA 92008

*****

Dear Julie and Bob,

Is Gil Kane terrific or is Gil Kane terrific? He and Marv Wolfman have turned the often trite *ACTION* into one of the best comics being printed today. I haven't seen Gil's art as exciting and powerful as this and all I can say is WOW!

Of course, you can't have a letter of praise without mentioning Marv's skillful writing. He's managed to bring out all of *Superman*'s vulnerabilities and exploit them to the fullest.

And this new Brainiac is the meanest looking villain I've seen in a long time, definitely a nasty piece of work, a worthy adversary for the Man of Steel.

Keep up the exemplary work and I'll keep reading!

MARK GARDOSI
5 Windsor Road
Rushden, Northants, England

*****

Dear Editor:

In the letter column of #545, there was a lot of comment, most of it praise, about Gil Kane's art. I think he's excellent except for one area—the *faces*. I can't put my finger on it, but there is something wrong with them. Other than that, I think he's your best.

As for the story, I'll be honest. I don't like the change you've made in Brainiac. I liked him the way he was. He was mean enough already, but now...! I wouldn't have minded so much if you hadn't changed his appearance as well. At least he used to look humanoid.

BRAD FILIPPONE
86 Higgens Street
Truro, NS B2N 2L7

*****

Dear Sirs,

I'm going to add my 2¢ to the great Gil Kane debate: I like Mr. Kane's work. He is very powerful and he does make you feel a lot of emotion concerning our hero.

As for the new Brainiac, he scares the heck out of me! And that was what was obviously intended, so kudos to all involved!

DOROTHY LYNN JOYCE
320 Hillside Avenue
Douglaston, NY 11363

*****

Dear Editor:

The new Brainiac is truly something to be feared for he/it is pure logic with only one purpose—the destruction of the Man of Steel. I have played with computers and know that they are not alive, but they take on a pseudo-life with games where they are the master and you are the mere man on the other side of the keyboard. It's spooky if you think about it.

Gil Kane is proving to everyone that he is not over the hill or past his prime. His panel designs are top-knotch in anybody's book. His *Superman* is the *Superman* for me!

MARK RYAN
10236 Monarch Drive
St. Louis, MO 63136

.....*ACTION* #545 is something like WOW and the new Brainiac is more deadly than ever. *Superman* is in for the fight of his life. Brainiac is now smarter and better-looking and I like him!

GEORGE ANDRADE
291 Lisgar Street
Toronto, Ont. M6J 3H1

.....#545 continued the saga of the transformation of Brainiac superbly. This incarnation of the villain is even more insidiously evil than the original. He doesn't have even the remotest hint of human emotion now and he's determined to destroy *Superman*.

GEORGE AUDIS WILLIAMS
Route 2, Box 217
Angie, LA 70426

.....I'm a maniac for Brainiac after issues 544 and 545. His new form makes him the most dangerous foe the Man of Steel has ever faced!

JOHN G. ROBERTS
582 Roberts Drive #97
Riverdale, GA 30274

.....*ACTION* #545 was stupendous. The new Brainiac is a step in the right direction for this magazine. Marv Wolfman is the best writer to come to these pages in a long time.

The art was great. You'd be crazy to lose Gil Kane. I like his work because it is "shadowy" where Curt Swan's seems to be "bright".

BRIAN WELCH
6856 Woodlake Circle
Navarre, OH 44662

.....The new Brainiac is much more deserving of respect. He is much more formidable than his earlier self. While he is laboring under the faulty programming he evidently has, *Superman* should be able to defeat him.

JEF PECKHAM
503 Marlatt Hall
Kansas State Univ.
Manhattan, KS 66506

.....Marv Wolfman's Brainiac is everything the cover claims he is: totally devoid of humanity, a cold, calculating machine, immensely powerful and intelligent. In other words, he is a very formidable adversary for *Superman!*

DAVID MERCURY
Toledo, OH

.....The new Brainiac is scary. He is the first character in a long while who seems to be a match for the Man of Steel!

WESLEY M. ALLISON
Box 149
Blue Diamond, NV 89004

Oh, hi, Julie! What am I doing? Writing the letter column for ACTION #549, of course! What do you mean, "Where are the editorial replies?" I've got one right at the start, then a second one, and then... and then... ummm! Gee, I guess I got carried away with all of the readers' comments! I mean, after what they all had to say, what more could I possibly add? Sure, I can be witty and clever! But I haven't got any more room in this issue. We're at the end of the column! Next issue, okay?—Bob Rozakis

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